AUSTRALIA'S MOST POPULAR SELF-SUFFICIENCY MAGAZINE

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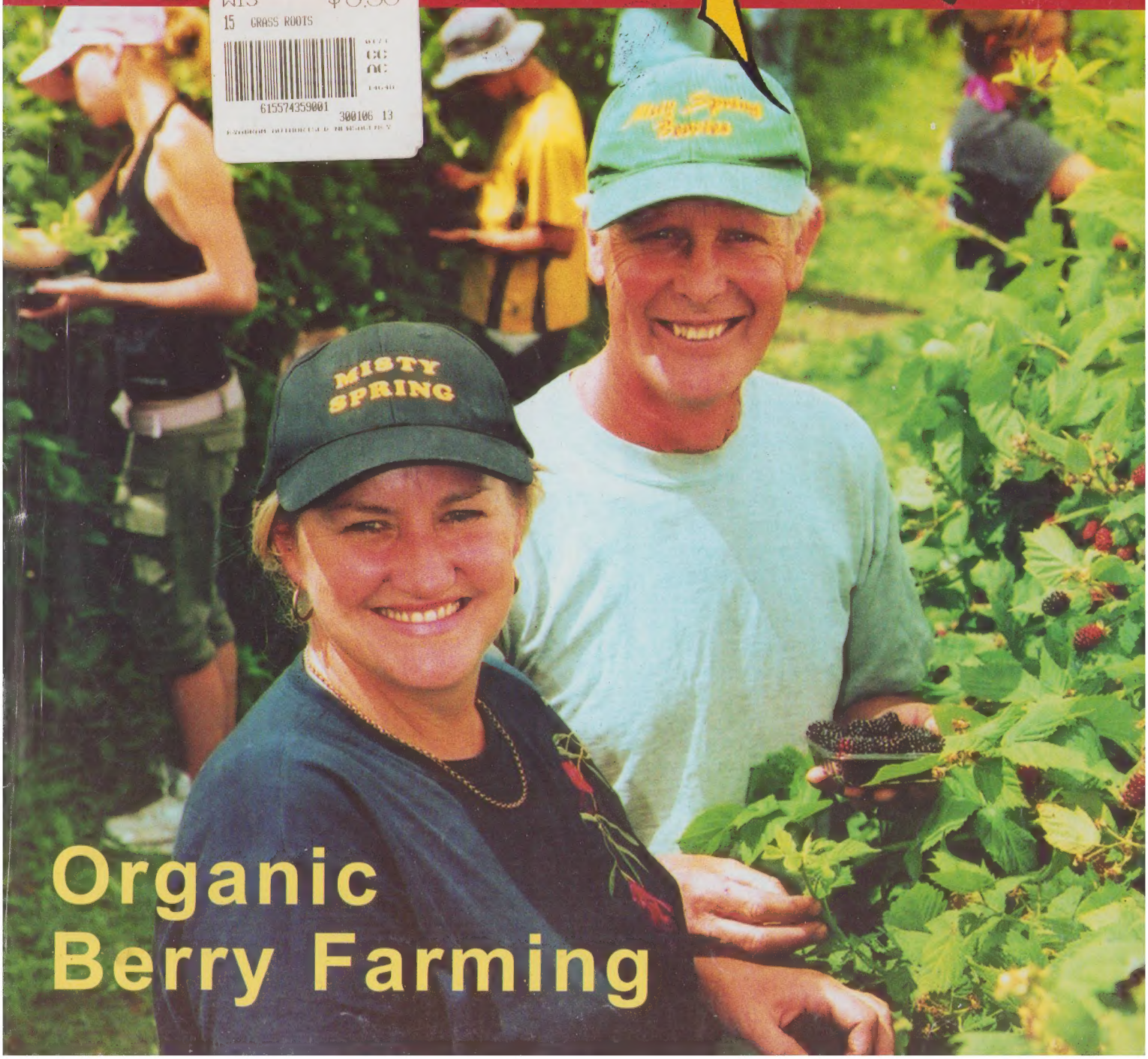

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Edited by Megg Miller and Mary Horsfall.

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GUMNUT GOSSIP

by Megg Miller.

Whether it's the effect of global warming or just a good old-fashioned hot summer, we've been panting and puffing through the high temperatures. Normally our annual break between Christmas and New Year is a time of adventure with lots of socialising and tackling of jobs that take longer than the average weekend to complete. The first couple of morning teas after we return, not surprisingly, are generally noisy affairs as stories are traded and achievements outlined. Not so this year; it seems we spent most of our break watering gardens or poultry and trying to keep cool. In fact, there were no complaints about returning to work or even having to get up early, such was the attraction of an air-conditioned office after so many very hot days.

Both Sue and I lost poultry, despite all our efforts, and our gardens took a real beating. Suni's response to the heat is to check the weather daily and enquire about rain. In Melbourne her suburb gets lots of showers and she's ever the optimist it will have drifted up to the rural retreat. 'What, it didn't rain here last night? It pelted down in Melbourne, don't tell me I've got to go and water again?' Mary, lucky duck, has a well set-up watering system and so, when we're complaining about which afternoon was the hottest, she'll look puzzled and add that she hadn't found it particularly hot. We're seriously considering kidnapping her hubby Rodney, who set up the system, and forcing him to convert all our gardens to his civilised method. Maybe there are some readers who have done exactly this – set up a watering system that is, just in case the sentence was confusing and it sounds as though kidnapping is the subject under discussion. Do share any handy tips or pitfalls to be avoided.

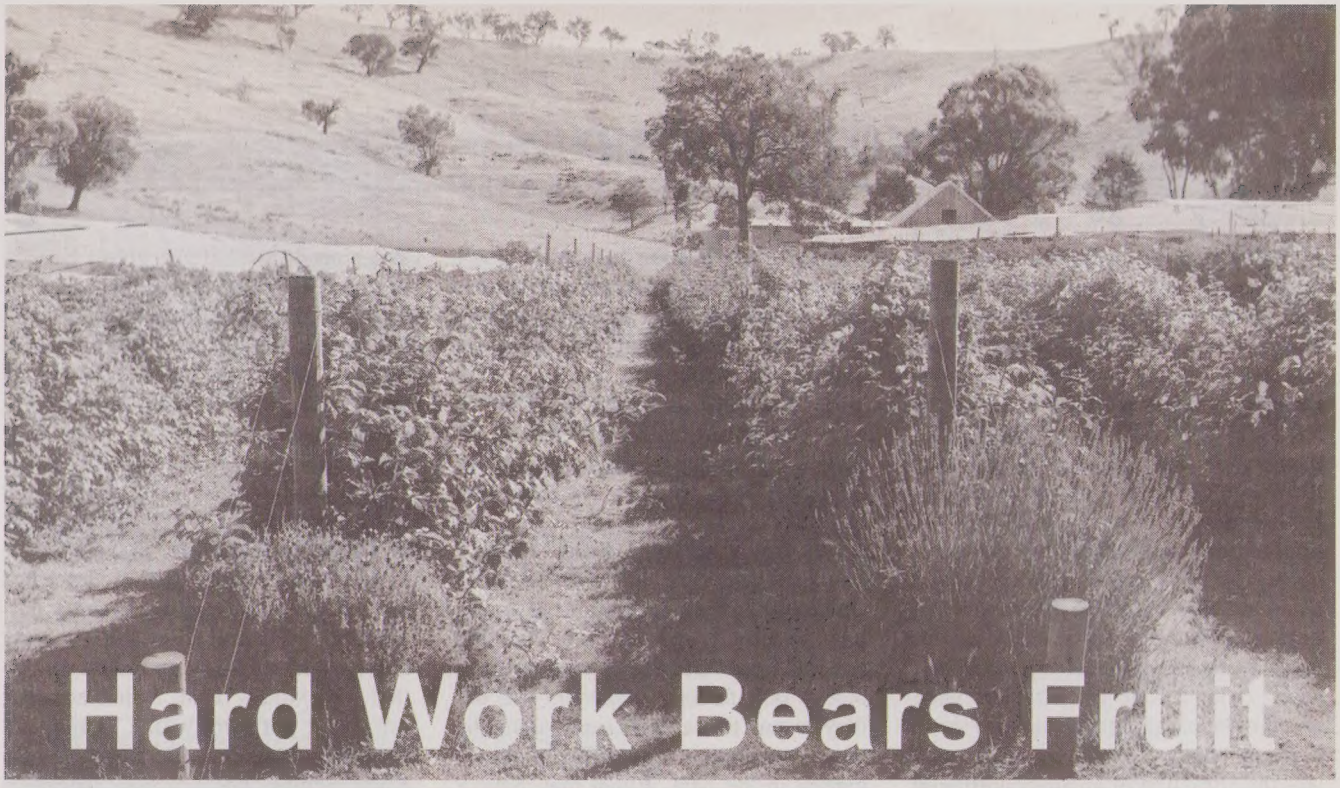
In December we welcomed a new team member, Jillian, who is mastering the idiosyncrasies of our computerised production system. A few times she's looked glum and come to my doorway to announce that a whole column of text has disappeared. She's actually managing really well, but nothing can convince her that the magazine won't come back from the printers with absent text or pictures. It's an awful feeling discovering errors, but her fears are unlikely to materialise as it's a team effort and someone is sure to pick up any hiccups. Jillian's pessimism is fuelled by the fact she hadn't saved important text properly on her home computer and it was lost when the power failed during a storm. She's a reluctant gardener, but fascinated with genealogy and has generations of ancestors identified and mapped out. We haven't heard of connections to blue bloods or infamous characters yet, but they're sure to rear their heads along the way. Considering how difficult it is to garden in the heat, Jillian may have a couple of converts to her hobby if we have more spells with 40° C.

Most GR readers have a patch of land or dream of owning one in the future. How to make it earn enough to pay the rates is a regular dilemma. If you have a small acreage and are at a loss to know how to make it earn its keep, the stories about organic berry production and growing bushfoods may start some ideas. I have to confess that after learning about bush tomatoes I went home and looked at my one and a half acres and mentally planned where a couple of rows could be put in. It's exciting to realise that marginal land can produce income with the right crop, a little water and plenty of hard work. And if your plot is just metres wide and in suburbia, don't give up; if you can't fit a couple of bushfood plants in, see if you can get one of the local schools to take a few different plants on.

Leading up to Christmas we were incredibly busy taking gift subscriptions for readers and their friends and families, but squeezed in the opportunity to talk with many delightful people. One reader organised a subscription for the medical tea room of an emergency ward at a leading hospital. Another person said her mother devoured GR when she came to stay and that a subscription was a selfish gesture really as Mum would be more available to everyone and more helpful if she didn't have to catch up on so much reading when she visited! Another said her mother had cuddled the gorgeous little bub featured on page 47 of this issue, Jane 'Many Leaves' Lawrance's little Emma. This mum frequents lots of markets that Jane attends and was tickled pink to nurse such a famous baby. The connections GR fosters create a lot of fun and really do add a sparkle to life.

Last issue June Birkett described her life growing up in the country during the 1940s and '50s and I'm sure most readers who were raised around that time would recall a similar waste not, want not family life. A note we received in response to June's 'Bush Kids' article described a strict but enjoyable childhood in Durban in South Africa. Shirley Arendt's letter brought her childhood to life via stories of train trips and magical details about jars of lollies in stores, tripe hanging outside butcher shops and the overpowering smell of molasses at the sugar mill where her dad worked. A section of her letter touched a chord in relation to GR living. 'My grandmother could never see any of us idle, there was always something to do and we were taught to set a dining table properly, sew, knit, embroider, patch, darn and more. We took piano lessons and used to have musical evenings, especially when my dad was home. Although we were brought up strictly it was a lovely childhood and to this day I still think along the same lines as my grandmother about the old idiom of waste not, want not, and I can make do or compromise quite well when need be. In regards to Christmas, we were taught the cost of a gift is not as important as the thought. Life has changed so much, but the family memories and simple, sound way of living stay with you.'

We're sure many readers who are at the child-rearing stage will be heartened to know that efforts to create unique and meaningful family celebrations aren't falling on deaf ears and will be recalled and built upon in future years.



Hard Work Bears Fruit

by Suni Miller, Avenel, Vic. Photos by Marcel Aucar.

Phil and Robyn needed an income from their smallholding and decided to experiment with berries. It's been a long road, but now their organic berries top the wholesale market.

Phil and Robyn Jones bought their farm in the rolling hills of the Central Victorian High Country 12 years ago. The 50-acre block was too small to make a living from cattle or sheep, so they were left with the age-old quandary – how to make an income from their hobby farm. They chose to go into berries.

'You have to pick something you have an interest in, something you love, to make it work', said Phil. 'We'd worked on a friend's berry farm in the past and he allowed us a patch there, so we had some experience. We trialled the berries and found they suited the area, surprisingly enough. The soil was too gravelly at first, but we've built it up over time using organic methods. The other issue was climate – we're a bit far north for berries, so it's hot here, but we've erected a shadecloth roof over the rows and they do extremely well.'

A RURAL BACKGROUND

Phil and Robyn both have country backgrounds, so are used to life on the land. They have been married for 32 years and have two daughters in their 20s who occasionally help on the farm. As well as the Wiltshire Horn crosses they keep for the freezer and the Angus cattle for added income, there's the dogs, Buffy and Jack, and Ralph the great white pig, who is kept solely for making compost for the vermiculture system. With all money going towards farm infrastructure, their owner-built stony hasn't progressed much in the last 10 years.

'Oh no, don't ask me about the house', said Phil. 'I suppose we're about a third finished. We bought a second block of land next door with the money earmarked for the house a few years ago, and that set everything back. Let's just say it's a long-term project.'

BERRY GROWING

The Joneses currently have four acres under fruit. The advantage of living in the high country is water, and they have a drip irrigation system that gravity feeds from a spring-fed dam. The spring is in the back gully and inspired the name of the business: 'Misty Spring'.

The farm grows an extraordinary range of berries: silvanberries, three varieties of raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, boysenberries, josterberries and loganberries just for a start. Silvanberries, a blackberry cross, are the main commercial crop and are sold to the wholesale market. Although the Joneses use wholly organic methods, and are in conversion with NASA, they compete on the open market.

'The volume is just not there for the organic market yet', Phil said. 'People want quality berries regardless of how they're grown, so that's where we compete. Of course, it costs us more than the commercial berry farms, but our organic methods have led to such a high standard of berry that we get good prices and often top the market. Our berries hold better in the coolroom, and berries are obviously very perishable, so this is a major advantage. They also have a better shape, and the way we pack them, we put more in. The label says 150 grams, but we like to line the berries up nicely, so it usually ends up being more like 200 grams. This means we always get return sales even though our prices are a bit higher than average. However, the running costs have

meant we've had to keep the business to a two-person team, though we could really do with an extra.'

The only time this changes is in picking season, when about 10 to 15 locals are employed to help pick the berries and pack and label punnets for the market-run Robyn does each evening.

ORGANIC METHODS

When asked why he chose to go organic, Phil scratched his head and said, 'It's just something I've always done. Being close to nature, it's how we should be'. The organic way of doing things is so integral to the place the Joneses can't imagine any other way. 'I'd definitely recommend it', Phil said. 'But it's not a five-minute job. Organic methods do take longer.'

The Joneses use seaweed and fish foliar sprays, and vermicast from the pig's manure factory, as well as pelletised BFA fertiliser in spring and autumn.

'With organics, you have to get in earlier as it takes a while for the fertiliser to break down. You also may need to use more to get a balance as there is less nitrogen in organic fertilisers', Phil said. 'But it's great to be able to walk down the rows and pick a berry and know the only thing that might be on it is a stray bird dropping.'

'We've done everything by hand here. We didn't cultivate to begin with, we just put on the mulch and let the worms do the work. We've improved the soil enormously and now when I mow, I see mud heaps from worms everywhere. Basically, I use small amounts of vermicast often, as an activator, then put on heaps of mulch. If you keep the mulch up, the worms will stay. Then I just use the foliar sprays for trace elements.'

Ralph the pig is integral to the system. Household scraps go into Ralph's pen and, as pigs are very clean animals, he turns these into manure and leaves them in one neat 'toilet' corner, making them easy to retrieve. The manure goes into a cut-off rainwater tank, about 60 centimetres high, full of worms. When it reaches the top, Phil forks the top layer, holding all the worms, into the next tank to start again, and puts the remaining vermicast on the berry plants.

'You have to keep the moisture levels up in the tank and don't let it overheat', Phil said. 'I put the manure on in small amounts so I'm not getting a compost effect. The vermicast is full of worm eggs and biologically active bacteria, so it's great stuff.'

Because the Joneses don't spray, the berries haven't been forced, their cell structure is stronger, and they last longer. 'It's all part of the balance', Phil said. 'The pickers always comment on the quality of our berries, so something is going right.'

There are minimal problems with pests and diseases as the soil is balanced and the plants are healthy. The only major chore is weeding, which is done by hand. Even the lavender bushes marking the end of each row look exuberantly large and fruitful.

'We planted lavender to stop people falling over the ends of the rows the way vingerons grow roses', said Robyn. 'But lavender seemed more logical as it isn't prone to moulds or diseases so would not be attracting these. Plus, if Phil gets stressed I just tip him upside down in the lavender and he comes out relaxed.'

Phil's Best Berry Tips

- Choose a sunny, protected spot and cultivate the soil first by mixing in humus and compost.
- Put a good amount of fertiliser on in spring (try seaweed or well-rotted chook manure). Remember, blackberries are deep feeders while blueberries and raspberries are shallow.
- Use lots of mulch to keep roots of all varieties cool.
- Keep berries weed free as weeds are very competitive and will cut production by half.
- Grow raspberries somewhere you can contain them and mow down any escapees – so not along your neighbour's fence.
- Supply trellises and foliage wires in pairs to stop canes from falling down.
- Once fruiting is over, prune old canes back to the ground and trellis new canes for next year.

Thinking Of Starting A Farm Business?

Phil and Robyn's advice:

- You don't have to reinvent the wheel, just look for something you could make a dollar out of on a smallholding and develop it.
- Keep it small at the start and see if it functions before investing everything. Do your sums – and then do it anyway!
- Put thought into what will suit your location and climate.
- Research your markets and marketing strategy as they are crucial.
- Speak to as many people as you can, some will talk back!
- Remember, you always have your own labour and your developing expertise.
- In the end, after all the research, you have to actually do the dirty work. That day-to-day stuff is the fun, so be hands-on. If you're not moving forward, it's not a goer.

VALUE ADDED

Cropping berries means the whole year's money must be made over a very brief summer. Although they've stretched the season by planting different varieties, the Joneses soon decided they needed to generate additional income from value-addeds. Selling the calves bred each year as weaners or yearlings was the first step. Next, they began to sell jam. They contract a professional jam maker, supply her with berries, then store the jams and sell them to shops and at markets over the next 12 months. They currently have 23 varieties of jams and marmalades.

The Joneses are also Victorian representatives for Bird Gard, which makes electronic devices that keep birds out of vineyards, farms, orchards and so on by making a noise. The noise causes a lack of communication between the birds and so interrupts feeding behaviour. The devices, which work off a deep-cycle wet-cell 12-volt battery, are specific to each breed of bird, as well as animals such as wallabies, possums etc. Such biological control is in line with the Joneses' organic principles and they sell the Bird Gards at the same field days and markets as the jams. This has been so successful Bird Gard now brings in almost half their income.

Last, the Joneses recently started a 'pick your own' program, where the public can come and help themselves. 'People choose the ripest and tastiest berries, which are usually too ripe for the markets, so it works well', Robyn said.

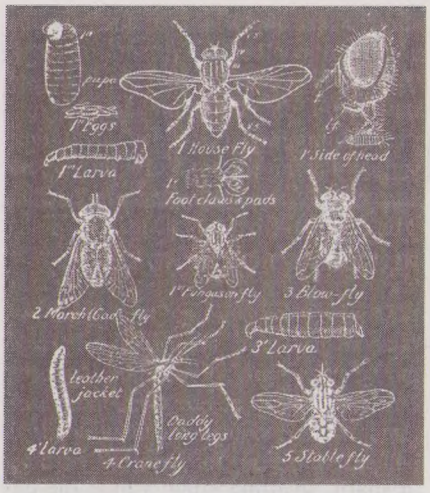
A GREAT LIFE

'I just love the lifestyle', Phil said. 'There's no time to feel lonely or isolated and we meet lots of great people through the business. You might make more money in the city, but we work in beautiful surrounds doing what we love, and we can take a day or two off when we feel like it. You can learn a lot through reading, but if you're not walking down the rows and looking at what the individual plants are doing, you're not in touch with your business.'

Misty Spring has evolved since it was started more than 10 years ago. 'We've looked at the directions we want to go, but we stuck to the wholesale market because that's where the volume is. We're a lot more successful now after all these years of hard work, but there's plenty of infrastructure yet to go in and, of course, that house to finish', Phil said.

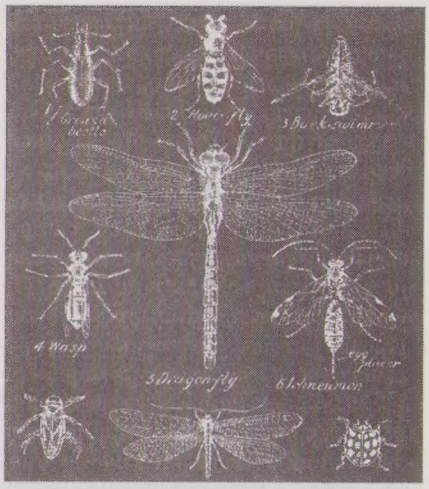
Robyn added, 'We're always busy, but we still find time for champagne on the porch with the pickers or the neighbours after work. After all, it goes so beautifully with the berries'.

Misty Spring Berries, Yea, ph: 03-5797-2934, or 0422-423-699.



Relieving Summer's Sting

by Barbara Saker,
Mermaid Beach, Qld.



This wonderful land of ours, as beautiful as it is, has a hidden side, where all the little midges live, the ones you can't see but feel every time you want to relax on the porch and enjoy the gentle breezes and softness of the evening. During the warmer months especially little white spiders crisscross their way from tree to tree to catch the unwary. There are little bugs and big BUGS, snakes, wasps and bees that lay in wait to inflict their painful bites and stings.

One of the most vivid memories of my childhood in country Chinchilla was having my legs swollen to twice their normal size from being bitten hundreds of times by pesky little midges. One of the 'preventative measures' of the day was to add embarrassment to pain by forcing the patient to carry a jam tin with burning cow dung to stop the attacks. Imagine how this was received at school! As you can appreciate, I really do have a personal interest in finding pleasant and effective cures.

We lead such busy lives these days it is all too easy to have a steroid or antibiotic prescribed if bitten, when we might have a natural remedy at our fingertips. We can then keep the pharmaceuticals for more serious illnesses so our bodies will give a better response when we really need them. There are many inexpensive and easily obtainable cures that will protect our families from the pain of bites and stings, it's just a matter of having an interest and taking the time to learn about them.

I brought up four children 40 kilometres from the nearest town. Then, as now, the cost of petrol in the country was an issue. To keep my children healthy I had to learn to use what I had on hand to protect them; we could not afford to take them to a doctor for every illness.

INSECT REPELLENT OILS

Pregnant women are advised not to use any essential oils in the first trimester.

Quick And Easy Repellent

Here's a light oil that's quick to make: keep it in your cupboard to use as an insect repellent.

10 drops lavender essential oil
5 drops eucalyptus essential oil
5 drops basil essential oil

Add this mixture to a 250-millilitre bottle of light carrier oil such as almond or high quality olive oil. Rub into the skin before venturing outside.

Dried Herb Repellent

To make an insect repellent from your own dried herbs requires a bit more effort, but is highly satisfying.

¼ cup bay leaves
1 cup pennyroyal
½ cup rosemary
¼ cup eucalyptus leaves, crushed or powdered
enough almond or olive oil to completely submerge the herbs
pennyroyal essential oil

Place herbs and carrier oil in a double boiler, cover and bring to a low simmer. Keep the simmer very low and slow for an hour. Strain, cool and add a drop or two of pennyroyal essential oil. Rub a small amount on your skin. It is safe for human and animal use.

Head Lice Prevention

Cajeput essential oil, better known as melaleuca, will help prevent head lice. Put a few drops in the hair conditioner as a last rinse, leave on for a few minutes and wash off.

In The Oil Burner

Burning lemon grass and lavender oils together will keep flies and mosquitoes away. Use peppermint essential oil to prevent ants and cockroaches from visiting too often.

FRESH LEAVES

To protect yourself against bites rub the skin with fresh walnut leaves.

If you are bitten, and it is extremely painful, crush fresh sage leaves and make a compress to cover the injury.

HEAT RASHES

In the summer nasty heat rashes can occur that cause itching and red peeling skin; they always seem to break out in the most uncomfortable places, like under the breasts or behind the knees. The hotter the weather the more unbearable the rash becomes and can make life miserable.

An easy way for the home doctor to treat these complaints is to keep a supply of chickweed ointment in the house. You can purchase this product, but if you prefer you can make your own and keep it stored in the refrigerator. Chickweed is amazing and has a multitude of uses. This humble little plant, which most of us regard as a weed, is one of the best skin herbs we have. If the ointment is rubbed over

the small of the back and gluteal region, extending to the thighs, it relieves rheumatic pain and the bruised feeling that can often come with it.

When using any fresh herbs from your garden to make ointments it is advisable to lay them out in the sun for a few hours to dry; this prevents any mould or bacteria forming.

Chickweed Ointment

This is a very quick and easy ointment to make. Melt 250 grams of pure lard in a saucepan and add a large handful of chickweed. Bring the mixture to the boil, stirring well. Simmer for half an hour then remove from heat. Strain the mixture through a fine colander or muslin. Transfer to screw-top jars and store in refrigerator.

There are more complex ways of making the ointments using oils and beeswax, which are wonderful, but as a mum caught on the hop and needing a quick fix to a painful problem, I often had to resort to the above recipe.

SWELLING FROM BITES

One of my children was allergic to bee stings and would swell so quickly it was frightening. Being so far from the nearest doctor, I had to have some type of medication in the house that would keep him safe until I got him to the hospital. Homoeopaths have many quick and safe solutions to this problem. *Apis Mellifica* became the answer to my prayer. It is a homoeopathic that reduces swelling quickly.

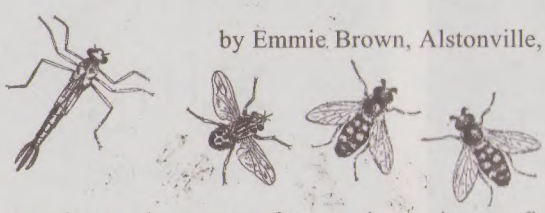
I kept *Apis* 6x in my cupboard always and it would give me the time I needed to get to town for help. Often, to my surprise, by the time we arrived at the hospital the swelling would have subsided, and I would feel a fool when asked what the problem was. I have since developed a first-aid box and believe me Apis is always in there.

Summer is a wonderful family time, Australia's time for holidays and picnics and light-hearted fun. Let's keep it that way by being aware, staying safe and keeping a few simple remedies on hand.

Barbara Saker is a practicing herbalist and naturopath.

A Biting Tale

by Emmie Brown, Alstonville, NSW.



Moving to the country from a city seems like achieving peace incarnate. The quiet untrammelled atmosphere by day, the romantic clarity of the moon in star-scattered skies by night create a serenity unparalleled.

Until you go walking through your piece of untouched rainforest, down to the creek, where, if you don't see them first, you can be touched by a stinging tree, the tiny hairs of which penetrate your pores and leave a smarting that lasts for weeks (some say months).

The rainforest's grandeur overwhelms with its beauty, but after a few hours one has other 'beauties': large red weals made by infinitesimal scrub or grass mites, which penetrate clothing and bite in places they find comfortable, but you don't. The groin and the armpit seem to be favourite settling places. The effect of these bites is a burning itching, which lasts in varying degrees of intensity for about a week.

Snakes, of course, abound. There's the huge and harmless python with interesting markings, all of them different. Brown snakes are said to be aggressive, but you don't linger to test this. The black ones, which tend to hug the creek, are reputedly less savage, but, again, you don't wait to find out. There are pretty green and gold tree snakes, said not to be venomous, so you can approach these with less caution, though the thought of having one drop from above isn't comforting.

Ants, of the biting kind, are many and varied and range in size from 12 millimetres to 25 millimetres. The leaping or jumping ant, at 12 millimetres long, has powerful nippers on a reddish head and its aggression is legend, if you are unfortunate enough to step on the nest or pick up some foliage it saw first. This savage biter hangs onto flesh until brushed off and leaves a sharp, swelling sting, which the day (and perhaps the week) after being bitten is still swollen, red and itchy.

One member of our family has an allergy to the leaper which gives him instant swelling of the face and lips, but fortunately a naturopath has given him an antidote that works and he now only suffers as we do.

The 25-millimetre-long bull ant comes out of its nest fighting too, but its bite isn't quite so painful.

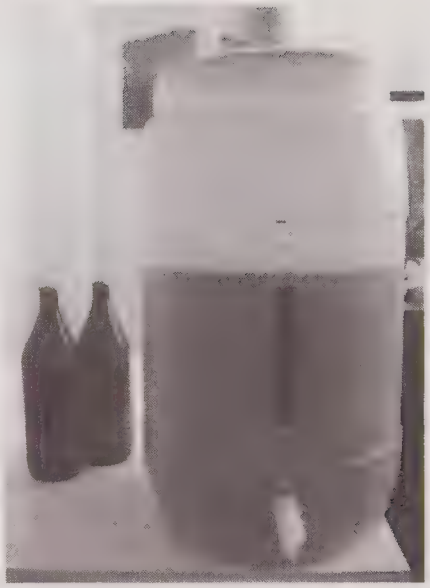
Of course, there is the common green-head ant, which you probably all know, but, believe me, the sting of that ant is a pinprick compared to the two aforementioned.

On the walk home you begin to think of ticks. Have I acquired any? Very often you have! The minuscule grass tick is hard to find, but its bite is not. The victim will experience swelling and itchiness, especially after it is removed and has injected you with its saliva as it is pulled out. The cattle and paralysis ticks, much larger and more tenacious, are simple to find. Immediate removal is advisable as, if one is missed and left for days, the recipient can feel quite ill. On one occasion I came home with a cattle tick under each ear lobe and the lobes ballooned after removal. Can't think how these were acquired. I must have thrust my head into a bush. Why would I do that?

We will never leave the country to again be city-bound. Despite its physical discomforts, there is a tranquillity that is addictive and a beauty that is undeniable. Until the tractors start up noisily! A city friend once said, 'Fresh air? I've been breathing in diesel fumes all day'. Can he be right?

Sea Change

by Harry Creevey, Old Bonalbo, NSW.



I'm told our move from the city to the farm comes under the heading of a 'sea change', even though the sea wasn't involved. A lot of people make the change for one reason or another. In our case we were given a little push: the major company I worked for had decided to downsize, a great term for putting a lot of people out of work. We could have stayed on, but the ship was sinking so we jumped overboard and headed for our little farm to see if we would sink or swim.

Never having been unemployed before in my life, I thought I wouldn't be out of work long. I hadn't bargained for the area we had moved to. Unemployment wasn't something you were afflicted with, it was a way of life. Work was more than scarce, it was nonexistent.

We decided we could make our own way by raising fat calves and growing fresh vegetables and fruit. We planted many different types of fruit trees, only to have most of them killed by the first frost. People wouldn't buy our vegies because they were already tied into a deal. The calves were a success, but we couldn't raise enough to live off them, though they did keep us in meat. To this end we bought some sheep, goats and pigs. Now we had beef, mutton, pork, bacon and ham and there were plenty of fish in the creek.

We still needed an income, so we tried the markets. I did wood-turning and Dorothy made soap, flavoured oils, vinegars and dried herbs. Dorothy had a very big garden, so we took along any excess produce. I locked up a paddock and grew sweet corn, which we took over by the trailer load.

We never did become self-sufficient, whether it was through a lack of dedication or the fact that the property was too small I don't know. I did refuse to work from daylight to dark, so that could have been it.

Today we are as close to self-sufficient as we can get. Our meat, eggs and vegetables are free for the work put in. We had to cut down on a lot of animals because Dorothy became allergic to them. Now Dorothy teaches permaculture part time through TAFE, trying to show others not how to be self-sufficient, but how to care for our planet.

In our time here we have had many people pass through our little valley. Everyone eventually comes over to have a look at what we have and tell us this is what they want to be – self-sufficient. We try to explain we really aren't, but it falls on deaf ears. Then we try to tell them about all the hard work involved, but once more we're told if we could do it they can, and we have to agree.

> ' Making your own beer seems to be the first thing newcomers put into practice. Soon the gardens are forgotten . . . '

I have made my own beer now for a very long time, and this seems to be the first thing most newcomers put into practice. Soon the gardens are forgotten so they can have that extra bottle out of the heat. It never takes long before there are new faces in the valley again. Of course, there are people who have given it a lot more thought before they arrived and have remained as neighbours, whereas others are part of a continually changing stream of faces.

Some reports would have you believe that all sea changes fail. I think this is only relevant to your perception of success and failure. I know a lot of people who have given up on the self-sufficiency lifestyle and returned to the city, but perhaps taking new perspectives and skills with them. A lot of others have successfully settled into retirement in the country, and there are still others who have given up on retirement and opened a business. In my case, and in the case of all I know who have remained, none wants to return to the city way of life.

When I drive to town I wave to the cars that pass because I know the drivers. In town as I walk down the street I greet everyone by name. Children can walk or ride their bikes to school without the fear of being dragged into a car. When I go to the doctor he wants to know how I've been, not just what's wrong with me. I may never be a millionaire or even be able to afford a new car each year, but I'm happy and in pretty good health (for my age) and can't imagine living in a city again.

Next issue I'll tell you how the tale began and about the search for our piece of paradise.

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Bushfoods Boom

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

Dennis Jenkin became interested in bushfoods over a decade ago, but neighbour and fellow enthusiast Andy Krohn hadn't heard of them until the men started chatting at the school bus stop in late 2001. All sorts of information is exchanged at rural bus stops, including what you're currently growing on your farm. Such a discussion sowed the seed for a satisfying bushfoods relationship between Dennis and Andy, as well as an enduring friendship. Andy credits Dennis with encouraging him to plant out his nearby acreage with bushfood species and for sharing propagation and sowing tips. 'He's been such a good friend and mentor that I really want to make him proud', said Andy.

Dennis discovered bushfoods when he was in rehab following a shocking car accident. Unable to walk, he had plenty of time for reading and thinking. He read everything he could get his hands on, came across bushfoods in a book and quickly decided he'd have a go. Up until that time he'd run a yabby farm on his 40 acres, selling to local restaurants, Healesville Sanctuary and fishing enthusiasts. 'Funnily enough, I made more money from bait yabbies than eating ones', Dennis said.

A COURAGEOUS BEGINNING

'Once I found bushfoods I spent a lot of time researching and picking the eyes out of material. Most of the articles and papers back then discussed how particular species could be grown rather than how they were grown because bushfoods were a newish concept. Once I'd found out about possible species that might suit local conditions I had to work out the tricks for propagation. This was the biggest hurdle to getting into bushfoods', said Dennis.

'I was sure my land and climate would suit arid type plants; it's not good enough for grazing and summers are very hot and dry. I sourced quandong seed from one of the first people to grow bushfoods commercially, an old fellow in his 70s from South Australia. As well, I bought seedling bush tomatoes, muntries, mountain peppers and lemon myrtle. It was a case of trial and error to see what did well. For example, mountain peppers wouldn't grow here, but I found that quandong, bush tomatoes and muntries thrived and, more recently, I've got into the bush limes', said Dennis.

'I came home from rehab in mid 1996 on sticks and it was clear I wouldn't be able to continue with the yabbies or my former profession of building. I got a dog, Max the Labrador, a strong loyal fellow, and it's thanks to him I got the seedlings planted. Despite pressure from friends and medicos, I put most of the seedlings in on my knees, edging slowly along the rows. The trip back up to the house was generally so exhausting that all I could do was hang onto Max and my sticks and he'd virtually drag me home.

'Each year I'd germinate a few more plants and even made my own smoked water to trigger seeds with. The work I've put in is bearing fruit; I'm now able to sell seed to different seed suppliers. If I were 20 years younger, I'd really push the project, and if you were to ask me if I'd do it again, the answer is yes. The business potential for species like bush tomatoes and even quandongs is really promising. With health issues bothering me, I'm winding down, but it's been great to have met someone like Andy. He's into it 110 percent', said Dennis.

NOT AFRAID OF HARD WORK

Andy Krohn also has a 40-acre block and, with the assistance of partner Kathy, has got the infrastructure set up for a commercial venture in bushfoods. A townie by birth and upbringing, Andy discovered horses early in life and became a jockey. Buying the block seven years ago was insurance for the future; by that time he was too heavy for racing, but was kept busy with track work. 'I moved up here because of the proximity of tracks and stables where I could get work, but I was also alert to other possibilities', Andy said.

For a couple of years Andy rented his block out and worked up north, taking over the camels on Great Keppel Island. Mixing camel trekking at sunrise and sunset with horse trekking during the day, Andy found himself working 14 15 hours a day, but loving it. 'I love animals and I'm not afraid of hard work', he

said. When insurance premiums went through the roof he sold the stock and came back to Victoria. The chance discussion with Dennis about what could be done on 40 acres opened up possibilities he hadn't previously considered.

'I'd never grown anything, but could see the potential of bushfoods. The idea took my fancy and, realistically, there wasn't another option for making an income from 40 marginal acres. Kathy chopped weeds out with an axe, which effectively stopped regrowth, and we picked up all the stone and carried it down to the creek to stabilise the banks. We couldn't leave it or the slasher would have been decimated. Bushfoods hate weed competition so slashing is part of the management program', said Andy.

He started with bush tomatoes; 500 seedlings that cost 50 cents each. 'They came around Christmas and we had to get them in straight away even though summer is not a good time for planting. Bush tomatoes die back in winter so it was essential to get the roots established so they could support the plant when it died back. We bucket-watered, making it a demanding time, but once they're established you don't need to water. Because we gave the seedlings extra water, they had fruit on them within months, something you wouldn't see normally until the plants' second year.'

Andy, as a result of discussion with Dennis, is aiming at seed production and propagation rather than growing and marketing fresh, dried or frozen produce. He's decided too he will avoid specialising in a single species, but grow a diverse range that includes ground covers (bush tomatoes, muntries), creepers (appleberry), shrubs (desert and blood limes), acacias (elegant, wirilda and a local species), trees (quandong and sandalwood) and fodder trees like tagasaste (not a bushfood) and kurrajong for shelterbelts.

'I've become fascinated by propagation; that's the area I want to develop. By growing seed and either using it for our propagation or selling it we won't be putting all our eggs in one basket. Farming is at the whim of fashion and I hope a range of species with diverse uses will help us in any tough times. As well, Kathy is keen on wild flowers; she grew up in Western Australia and says it's spoilt her because the wild flowers in that state are fantastic. She's got seed for a range of species and is learning as much as she can. Right now her time is limited as we have a lively 20-month-old girl, Katie-Anne, and she has to be watched all the time', said Andy.

At present Andy works off-farm as a fork-lift operator and has been watering the bushfoods at midnight. 'That worked well for a while, but I've found I miss problems in the dark. The cockatoos might shred a protective cover or pull a drip tube out, or weeds take over, and suddenly there will be a stressed or dead plant. I've decided I can use my time more efficiently so I'm putting more automatic watering in. The limes have to be irrigated, so prior to getting them I put down 800 metres of five-centimetre poly in a circle around the property, which gives constant pressure. When I've finished there will be five kilometres of 19-millimetre poly with drip lines off it. We're running the present irrigation system off a fire-fighting pump, an Onga with a Honda motor, that runs for three hours before it needs refilling, which is perfect. A second pump might be necessary later.'

LEARNING CURVE FOR ANDY

Andy confesses to being a perfectionist, and his fences and use of a string line in making rows for planting bush tomatoes support this. With money and time often short, he and Kathy have learnt some hard lessons. They have had some losses, particularly with the blood limes, which didn't do as well as the desert variety. 'The cockies have done a lot of damage. We used milk cartons to protect the blood limes, punching the drip line through the wall. The cockies pulled out the lines, snipped off the plants and shredded the cartons. Plastic guards, though costly, move in the wind and this frightens the birds and the sun reflects off them and this scares them too. Also, I missed picking up a broken pipe when watering at night and 40 of the blood limes were wiped out. The other lesson we learnt was that root-bound seedlings are not going to thrive, bushfood species are fussy that way', said Andy.

GENERAL BUSHFOODS ADVICE

Dennis is adamant there isn't a 'best' species. 'Work out your climate and soil

A blood lime in flower.

Andy's blood and desert lime grove. For a closer view of a blood lime, see opposite page.

and try and match a species to them. I would have loved to have grown mountain peppers, but they couldn't cope with the conditions here. My way of looking at it was: arid-type environment, right, arid plants will do well here.'

For Andy, realising some species needed watering to become established wasn't a surprise, but the fact that some species needed watering to boost yield was. 'It makes sense because you're putting pressure on a plant to produce higher yields. All the species Dennis and I have grown hate wet feet. Anywhere there is a risk of wet boggy areas occurring we've mounded up the soil. Watering is crucial in hot dry summers for the first, even second year; after that you're right. Never water bushfoods during the heat of the day, they get leaf scald wherever water is sprinkled on them.'

Both Dennis and Andy agree that bushfoods are difficult to transplant. They recommend buying species at the seedling stage, then taking measures to avoid root shock and minimise handling. Have the hole dug and water on hand, then try not to disturb the root ball. A good watering should follow.

Weeds are likely to be a bigger problem than pests. Hand-weeding is best because it disturbs the ground and this lets the water in. With pests, it's usually only when plants are stressed, for example during drought, that they become susceptible to insect attack.

BUSHFOODS FOR BACKYARDS

Bush Tomato (*Solanum centrale*)

Bush tomato is often called desert spice because it's used as a seasoning and is terrific for adding flavour to sauces and casseroles. Transplant seedlings one metre apart as the plant grows into a straggly shrub and suckers all over the place. Foliage dies back in autumn. Suckers can be transplanted. Fruit usually appears in the second year and well cared for backyard plants will last as long as 10 years, though four years is the life span in commercial production. Fruit dries on the bush and looks like raisins.

Muntries (*Kunzea pomifera*)

If you have a weekender in dry bushland, muntries will probably thrive there. A low, spreading ground cover, it's amenable to pruning, which is just as well as it's grown from cuttings. It will spread up to a metre, bearing delicate tiny flowers around November and setting fruit in January. Fruit is intensively flavoured and an alternative to raspberry.

Appleberry (*Billardiera cymosa*)

Sweet appleberry is a creeper and will grow from three to six metres, so choose an appropriate site. A difficult plant to propagate, once established it is rapid growing and can be trained along fences or over pergolas. Appleberries ripen in summer, either falling off the bush or changing to a reddish purple colour. Taste is not unlike kiwi fruit with a little aniseed added. Use in fruit salad or mix into apple pies.

KEEN TO START?

Dennis recommends *Grow Your Own Bushfoods* by K and I Smith, published by New Holland, for information on species. Andy has started propagating so if you would like to find out what seedlings are available, ph: 03-5799-0438. Best time is up to 12am daily or send an SAE to 12 Wattle Rd, Northwood 3660.

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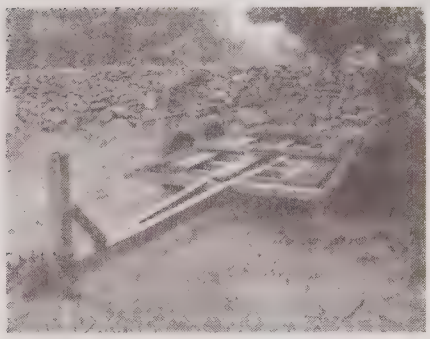
Equipment For Small Farms

by Clive Colenso, Kangaroo Island, SA.

If you're after implements for the bush block, you may have to modify regular equipment. Attend clearing sales and you'll find old machinery begging for a facelift.



People with small acreages often have trouble locating affordable farm equipment. I've found that farm and rural clearance sales are a great first port of call for locating implements and materials for making and modifying useful equipment for use on small blocks. I have three trailers acquired in this way.

TRAILER RECYCLING

The first, a tandem axle salvage (tractor carrying), was purchased for $100. I built it up with a rugged new chassis and frame from a rusted out one. The old bin serves as a demountable skip that can be winched onto the chassis to cart materials. The winch post on the drawbar accommodates a one-tonne capacity winch mounted onto a base plate and square spigot, which can be transferred to tractor implements as required. The side rails are angled outwards to accommodate my sailing boat and launcher, which can both be winched on piggyback fashion for road trailing without immersing the road trailer. The other two trailers and numerous other items were winched onto this trailer from clearance sales, as was my Fergie as a nonrunner.

The second trailer was a super spreader purchased at a clearance sale for $20. I removed the bin, which became an outside storage container for nuts and bolts, and also the drive train for the spreader mechanism, which will be my contribution towards a friend's waterwheel project. My interstate neighbours bowled up with the modular water tank, which is of a type recycled after having contained chemicals, with a nominal value of $200 and a capacity of 1000 litres. I just needed to attach a 50-millimetre coupling and repack the hubs with grease to gain a strong water cart.

The third trailer was the turntable of a cart, which I secured for $1 and made up into a fire and irrigation trailer high enough to gravity feed. I fabricated the cranked drawbar to retain the 500-litre Denyers fire tank level and fitted a two-horsepower Honda pump demountable to pump into the tank from a dam.

IMPLEMENT RECYCLING

To obtain implements, old farm machinery can be a useful starting point for engineering your own requirements, if only for the amount of metal salvaged. Large, discarded implements can be cut down to size for use on small tractors. I was offered two rusted-out slashers, which I reduced to 1.4 metres using most of the existing material. The New Holland gearboxes can have the slack taken out by removing the shims, which enables new bottom seals to be fitted.

I made one into a chain flail by cutting down the blade and welding on chain in order to slash firebreaks in rough and rocky areas. Be sure to fit a PTO slip clutch to your implement to prevent damage to your tractor's transmission from any jamming of the implement.

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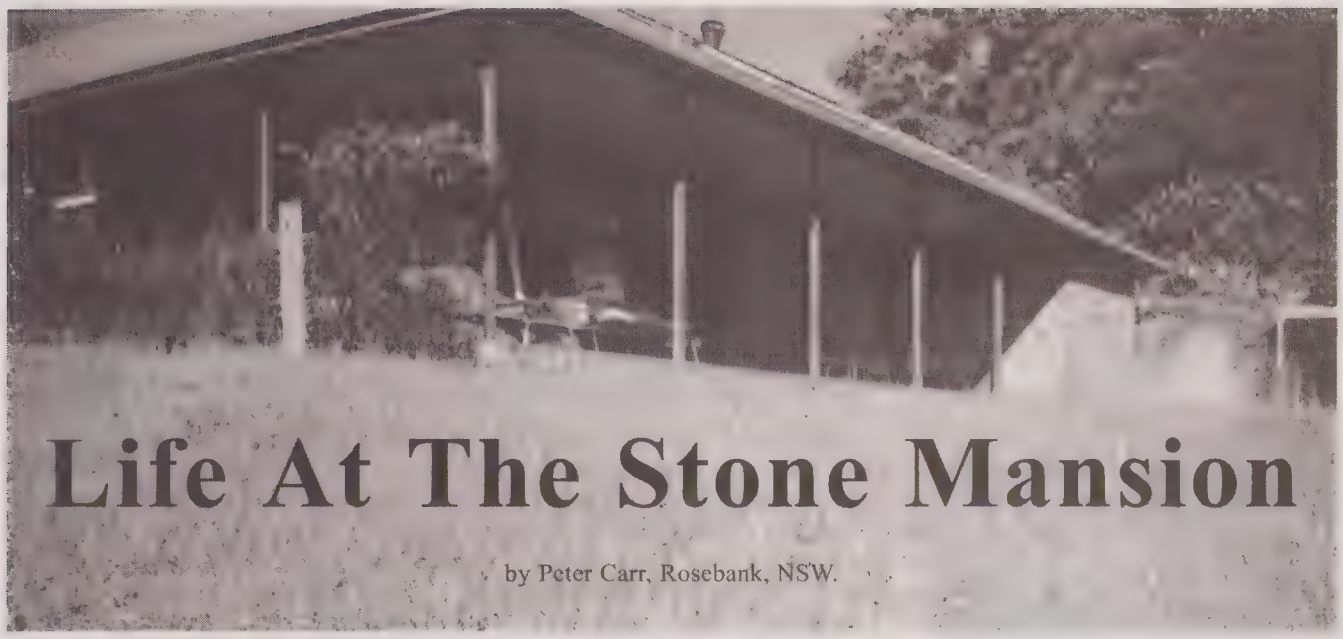

Life At The Stone Mansion

by Peter Carr, Rosebank, NSW.

There has been a lengthy silence emanating from our rustic north-coast haven, principally because I firmly believe that if one has nothing to write about there's no point in picking up a pen. However, after several hours spent in the prone position devouring in one greedy gulp two editions of *Grass Roots*, I've decided it's time to regale everyone with an update on our activities.

ELEVEN YEARS IN THE MANSION

We have been living in our stone mansion for nearly 11 years now; the bangalow palm in the courtyard towers over the house, the water lilies in the fish pond are about to bloom again, but the goldfish are a bit hard to see because of the black plastic liner, to say nothing about the murkiness of the water. These hot days the spa pool gets a good working out.

ENJOYING THE FRUITS

Our farming ambitions have steadily decreased with the onset of galloping senility, but enthusiasm lasted long enough for us to now enjoy the fruits of our early labours. There's a banana bunch on one of our palms. Our jaboticaba fruited last year and again this year, so I am able to pass on a tip for anyone making jam from jaboticaba: don't use the skins as they make the jam taste resinous. We'll get a few Brazil cherries (*Eugenia brasiliensis*) this year; the tree flowered prolifically, but the rains came and washed out the nectar, so there was a poor fruit set. We got tonnes of peaches, nectarines and plums, but fought a losing battle with fruit flies and birds. Nevertheless, I managed to freeze quite a few ice cream containers of stewed fruit and made some fruit butters. All you do is pulp the fruit and add half a cup of sugar for each cup of fruit and then cook as jam. As a jam maker I am a real neophyte and a couple of bottles went fizzy. Practice may improve my success rate.

CONSERVATION SUCCESS

A few years back we sold our souls to the NSW Land and Water Conservation Department. In return for a nice sum of dollars we agreed to let the steep parts of our paradise return to native forest. Where appropriate we let nature take its course and elsewhere we hired help to get rid of weeds and plant trees. Despite a series of dry years and the attentions of the local wallabies, we have had a pleasing amount of success. We also planted a five-acre woodlot, half eucalypts and half cabinet timbers, and they're doing fine.

DONKEY DISASTERS

There's still a generous amount of grass for our donkeys, but the flock has diminished from a dozen to five. We think that three succumbed to eating the poisonous seeds of a local plant and two succumbed to the passage of time and my shotgun; they were down and were not going to get up, so I had to help them to greener pastures.

REPTILIAN PREDATORS

The latest addition to the property is a stone poultry palace. I have had a gutful of the activities of the local python population and the fraternity of foxes. Prior to the partial completion of the new edifice I would find of a morning the corpses of poultry with neck feathers suspiciously moist. Obviously an ambitious young carpet snake had bitten off more than he could swallow. Then there were the four we actually caught in the chook yard, one of them with two suspicious abdominal lumps consisting of 50 percent of our gosling hatching. These four we enticed into chook feed bags and relocated; one of these sank its fangs into my left forearm when I grabbed him too far behind the head.

Fortunately we have been free of feral predators in the chook yard of late, but not elsewhere. We keep empty jam jars in a high cupboard in our pantry, all four walls of which are stone from floor to ceiling. I opened the cupboard door to be faced with the sight of the coiled body of a night tiger snake, AKA brown tree snake, a venomous but back-fanged and slow moving species. The problem was how to dislodge, capture and dispose of it without damage to the snake and, more importantly, to me. There was a period of deep thought, during which the snake moved not a muscle. Eventually I convinced Marg to climb a second ladder and hold an open sack just below the trespasser. I intrepidly gave the snake a nudge with

a very long stick and, wonderful to relate, the snake was in the bag. Sighs of relief all round.

NO MORE LADDERS

I am fast losing all affinity with ladders. Early last year Marg decided we needed a weather vane. The NSW donkey society had one for sale with the usual NSEW bit and a couple of donkeys on the bit that veers with the wind. My task was to affix the article to the roof of our donkey shed, so up the ladder I went. Matters proceeded smoothly until an unwary movement on my part caused the ladder to lurch to the right. No self-respecting left-winger was going to put up with that, so I made a compensatory lurch in the opposite direction, thereby parting with my prop and stay. A desperate and unsuccessful grab for the roof with my left hand was followed by a swift return to earth. The result was a broken left tibia and about 10 weeks of incapacitation, first in a splint and then in a cast. My recovery was complete, but I am now a confirmed terrestrial with no ambition to become an aerialist.

Inside the Carrs' cosy 'stone mansion'.

The poultry palace is a recent addition.

WE STILL LOVE GRASS ROOTS

After all these years we still both look forward to the arrival of *Grass Roots* in the mail and read it with joy to catch up on all the news. One of these days I'll dig out the first edition and make a comparison with modern times; that should prove interesting.

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Remember The Humble Nasturtium

by Ann Howard, Dangar Island, NSW.

My garden is threaded through with brilliant cherry red, yellow, scarlet and orange nasturtium flowers, tall and dwarf and climbing. Flowers trail across a path from a cracked brown teapot – large, five-petalled and slightly funnel-shaped, and so prolific that at one time I started getting rid of them. Now, I prize them because I know the plant contains iron and a high level of vitamin C and was once eaten as a remedy for scurvy. Medicinally, nasturtiums are said to have a tonic, cleansing and antiseptic effect.

Nasturtiums are found in many parts of the world. The seeds were taken to Europe from Peru by Spanish explorers in the 16th century. 'Nasturtium' means nose tormentor and refers to the bite of the leaves. The plant dies down as the cold weather begins. If it threatens to take over your garden, it is easily removed by hand.

Nasturtiums have a pleasant scent in the warm weather. They repel aphids and cucumber beetles. The plant secretes a mustard oil, which whiteflies find attractive, and these pests will seek out nasturtiums in preference to any cabbage, cauliflower, or broccoli. Nasturtiums are particularly good planted near radishes to give them a hot taste.

I think the soft, almost circular leaves, darker on the top, cupping towards the sky, are beautiful. One morning my three-year-old son came slowly towards my bed, carefully carrying a leaf with a crystal-clear drop of dew wobbling about in its centre and told me it was better than a cup of tea to drink, before he tipped it over my face!

Leaves can be used in salads, where they impart a distinctly bitter peppery taste. They can also be used to flavour vinegars, as a substitute for watercress, in vinaigrettes, salad oils, pasta, sandwiches and garnishes.

The unripe fruits can be picked and used like capers but, eaten in large quantities, have a purgative effect. Seeds and leaves, finely chopped, can be blended into butters and cheeses to give a more piquant flavour.

The children sip the nectar in the flower spurs. Flowers make a colourful edible garnish, or can be filled with a cream cheese and herb mixture shortly before serving. I have had many surprised dinner guests who have cautiously eaten 'flowers', which seems to me a very strange attitude when you look at what most people eat.

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OGRR0206

Gardening Your Way To Health

by Bob Rankin, Apia, Samoa.

The strange thing about good health is that everybody wants it, but so few seem to know or care how to ensure it. Good health is the natural state of human beings and comes from the body being in balance with itself and with nature. In other words, it requires a natural way of life. The modern materialistic world of frenetic activity is full of noise and fast foods, and people are preoccupied with making more and more money to acquire more and more unnecessary goods. The resulting stress and unhealthy diet make the kind of balance necessary for good health harder than ever to achieve. Hence, the growing waiting lists at hospitals and increased consumption of drugs aimed at prolonging unhappy unhealthy lives.

If you want to get on the road to health, the first thing to do is start growing your own food. Not only is food from your own vegetable garden good for you, stress disappears in the pleasure of growing your own, home-grown produce tastes far better than what you can buy, and you will save a small fortune in medical and grocery bills.

When did you buy a tomato in the supermarket that tasted really good and didn't have such a thick skin you needed an ultra-sharp knife to cut it? And how often have you bought a peach or nectarine in the store that looked great, but tasted nothing like it should?

Growing your own fruit and vegetables is easy; tending them can take as long as you like or only an hour or two a week, and you don't need that much space. A two by four metre garden will easily supply all the vegetables a family of four needs for the year. It might require a bit of exercise at first to dig it over with a pick or a spade, but it doesn't have to be done all at once. Spread it over a few weeks and you'll feel all the better for it. A raised no-dig bed is even less work and fun to construct as well.

The question facing every gardener is what to plant and when. Tomatoes, capsicums, dwarf beans and cucumbers like the warmth; broccoli, broad beans and green peas like the cold, and you can generally grow cabbage, lettuce, silverbeet and parsley all the year round. Follow the instructions on the back of the packet and you can't go far wrong.

There is a huge variety of vegetables to choose from. Some are so easy, tasty and productive that they stand out above the others. My favourite six that I think should be in every garden some part of the year are tomatoes, silverbeet, lettuce, dwarf or runner beans, cabbage and triple-curled parsley. Carrots and onions come close behind.

What you should remember is that vegetables are a bit like people – they need water, good food and nurturing if they are to do well. Clear any weeds from around them, make sure they never dry out, and keep them happy with fertiliser to make them grow. You can buy fertiliser cheaply enough, but once again nature is best. Get your own fertiliser for nothing from compost by piling up lawn clippings, other vegetable matter and household scraps. Depending on what ingredients you use, the warmth of the weather and

how often you turn your heap, it will take from a few weeks to several months for this to decay into rich black soil that plants love.

Plants are like people in other ways too; they get tired of being in the same old place year after year, and they prefer the company of some plants to others. To get the best results from your garden, rotate the position of your vegies by planting them in a different spot each season and keeping together those plants that grow well with each other. Common companion planting combinations are beans or tomatoes with cabbages, sweet corn with cucumbers or pumpkins, and lettuce with carrots or radishes. It also pays to grow a few marigolds among your vegetables to discourage pests.

If you are not sure what to plant, check out the gardening books in your library or tap into the huge amount of information on the internet. Better still, ask one of your gardening neighbours. You'll find that gardeners are among the friendliest people in the world and they love introducing people to the joys of their hobby.

Save money, keep fit – a lot of food can be grown in a small space.

If you are one of those people who has never planted a seed or a seedling in their life, get out there now and try it. You'll be surprised at the pleasure you get from it, to say nothing about how much healthier you'll feel.

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Bushfire Safety

by Noel Carr, Darkes Forest, NSW.

Living among the gum trees does have its pleasures, but it also has its drawbacks, one of which is the bushfire hazard. A bit of ingenuity and some forward planning can minimise the risk for anyone living on a property in a bushfire-prone area.

MINI PUMP AND DRUM SYSTEM

I think the best invention since sliced bread would have to be the new mini pumps of Chinese or Japanese manufacture. They cost from four to five hundred dollars, weigh about six kilograms when primed and deliver approximately 125 litres per minute.

Such a pump can be lifted on one finger or carried in a shopping basket, making it ideal for the elderly or anyone who has trouble carrying or moving a heavy weight.

There is no sight more ridiculous than that of a person dressed in shorts and thongs standing on a tiled roof waiting for a fire with a failing garden hose. A bit of preparation by means of a number of water-filled 200-litre drums standing at stations around the house and a mini pump primed to connect will cause the red steer to lose some of its punch. The drums should be kept full at all times during a bushfire danger period. Larger diameter (19 millimetre) hoses with snap-on fittings should be kept ready for use.

You can make your ute into a bushfire fighter by mounting a couple of these water-filled drums on the tray, kept upright by means of a steel frame on the back. Connect up the mini pump on the ute's tray and a 'click-click' sprinkler on a steel pipe protruding above the vehicle. This type of sprinkler throws a 24-metre diameter circle of water around the vehicle, which can now run through a fire if one is silly or brave enough. The unit can also be placed alongside a road accident for extra safety in case a fire breaks out.

The spray unit can be disconnected and a 50-metre hose run out. The pump can be carried from drum to drum as required. The main worry with plastic equipment is the toxic smoke it can produce if caught in the flames.

BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL DOME

I have also developed a bushfire survival dome, which measures 2.13 metres high and 4.26 metres in diameter, with an access hatch 68 centimetres in diameter. The shell is made of wire netting, then silver building paper, followed with more netting, which is covered in cement. The secret of its success is that it must stand on an earth floor, allowing it to function like a Coolgardie safe as there is constant condensation within. The temperature inside is 20° below that outside. The structure can be built for about $1000 if you do it yourself.

If you don't want to get inside the dome yourself during an emergency, it can be used to store personal valuables and documents, remembering to place them in waterproof plastic bags.

Various experts say to stay inside your home during the fire front, but I don't advise you to do this if your home is weatherboard. With a dome such as this you can enter the dome when the fire comes close and exit as the red steer leaves, usually about 10 minutes. Now is the period when buildings are likely to burn and action is really required.

Domes such as this could be mass produced, maybe in a lighter, fireproof material, and lifted by helicopter for placement on fire trails during an emergency. Even with their own spray systems, fire tenders can become trapped. In a big burn the pumper can be out of water when protection for the crew is needed, so there should be a reserve supply on the tank.

Water-filled drum in steel frame mounted on the ute tray with mini pump.

The bushfire survival dome is a refuge from the fire front.

Bushfire Resources

For more information on what to do during a bushfire, go to: www.nswfb.nsw.gov.au/education/publications.htm and check out their free fire safety fact sheets. The website www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au/commsafety/resources.htm has free fire safety brochures for you to download. Or contact your local CFA for a chat or, even better, join up and become a volunteer.

If it's an emergency situation, call the National Disaster Hotline on 1800-227-228.

A Table To Talk About

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

Spare tiles and an old table are a recipe for creative fun. For a few extra dollars, you can make a lasting and colourful table top.

If you have an old table languishing on the verandah or catching dust in the garage, give it a new lease of life with a handmade mosaic tile top. The table I rejuvenated had been put outside during house renovations, with the planned week or two extending into months. The top, originally Formica, had long detached so the surface of strawboard was visible. As well, the table top dipped somewhat in the centre. In fact, it looked so shoddy it was earmarked for the tip.

How would the table look decorated in mosaic tile pieces? When you renovate there are always a few tiles left over, plus a modest pile of samples bought or collected to assist colour scheme planning. The leftover tiles usually sit for years in sheds – using them up in a project was an appealing thought. A trip to a hardware store indicated the wooden surface of the table top would have to be sealed once, if not twice, prior to applying glues.

The tiles I had were a dull lot, so I revisited the shop where I had purchased my bathroom tiles. Yes, as a good customer I was welcome to fossick out the back and take any of the rejects and throw-outs I liked. This was wonderful, though the choice of colours was limited. To get some bright highlights into the design I created I had to buy a couple of red and yellow tiles, but it's doubtful I spent more than $10 on tiles all up. A sort through the boxes of grout powder in the garage elicited an almost full box in an ivory colour, a perfect complement to coloured tile pieces. Unfortunately, it didn't stretch to filling in all the gaps, so a second box had to be purchased.

Much of the mosaic work had been completed before the article on this craft appeared in GR 169. I was amazed there was an easier way of breaking tiles than throwing them on the concrete floor of the carport and dodging! Suzanne's advice to put a tile in a towel or folded fabric and tap with a hammer made finishing off easier and quicker and I wished I had read her article before commencing the project. Obtaining small, odd-shaped pieces of tile to fill the gaps I'd left was unbelievably easy using the towel and hammer tapping method.

At the start of the article I mentioned that the table top dipped in the centre. What did I do about this? Nothing! I considered purchasing a piece of cement sheet and screwing it into the strawboard, but was concerned there could be movement in the sheet if heavy objects were placed in the middle of the table where the dip occurred. If it was a new table or a costly one, I would not have been so cavalier, but either replaced the strawboard or braced it so it sat firm and level. Because of the age and condition of the table, it was ideal to experiment on and get the technique fine-tuned for the next mosaic project.

What tips can I pass on? I tended to work from the edge inward and took advantage of the machine-finished sides of tiles to provide safe, smooth edges around the table top. I wouldn't recommend using the broken sides of tile pieces around the edge of the table in case of causing injury. I was mindful when applying adhesive to tile pieces to slap it on thick with tiles going onto the low, middle part of the table top and spread it thin on the pieces being glued around the edges.

It's important to keep tops of tile pieces clean. If they're covered with extra adhesive, gently wipe it off, it's difficult to remove once it has dried hard. The other area where problems occurred was grouting. Bending over with chin on chest can cause an awful headache, so grouting is best done in small blocks of time every couple of days. This can lead to uneven work or a rough finish. I found it easiest to apply grout and let it dry to an almost leathery consistency before smoothing it with wet fingertips.

Overall, the project has been a lot of fun and the table top is a conversation piece. Everyone who calls is fascinated by it and amazed that such an interesting surface can be created for a cost not much more than a couple of meals at the local. Now I'm looking around for another surface to apply mosaic to. After all, there are still a few unused tiles, some adhesive and three-quarters of a box of grout powder. Any suggestions?

Healthy Homemade Wine

by Neville Jackson, Valhalla.

The Jewish Talmud stated that 'wine is the foremost of all medicines'. However, we would modify that statement with, 'as long as it is low-alcohol and in modest quantity'.

Some might think that wine cannot be considered healthy, but most fruits and vegetables naturally give a low-alcohol beverage that contains a wide range of essential minerals and vitamins, plus benefits only apparent to the maker (and closest friends).

We achieve that happy position with our homemade wines made from organically grown produce. These wines are low in alcohol by design. We prefer the heady scents and flavours of past seasons, rather than a drug that stupefies and dulls the senses.

Wine is most likely to have originated in ancient times from the fermentation of grapes. However, healthy, easy-to-prepare wines can be produced from a wide range of fruits, vegetables, grains and herbs. Blackberries, youngberries, serviceberries, loganberries and strawberries are especially good, as are rhubarb and lemon balm.

The impetus for us to make our own libation was the imposition of higher taxes on wines. Our purchases had been of a very modest nature, but we considered a glass of wine each evening was our reward for a good day's effort and shouldn't overly enrich the government.

FIRST ATTEMPT

Our first effort, and almost our last, was with parsley. It was simple enough to make, but this medicinal wine was definitely an acquired taste. The first (very small) glass had a taste that bordered on awful; the second was not too bad and a third quite acceptable. Of course, this parsley wine was not fully matured. We tried other produce, such as rhubarb, which after only a few months' maturation gave a good rosé.

When wild blackberries on common land came into fruit we filled numerous buckets to produce, literally, gallons of blackberry wine. The hardest part is always the wait before the taste test. This deep red, almost black wine after just three months was superb. It was not very alcoholic, but that wasn't the point. It was enjoyable, with a wonderful heady aroma, beneficial and tax free – a rare commodity these days.

When we heard the council was about to spray the blackberries, we obtained a dozen cuttings of youngberries and loganberries. These were taken in autumn, planted along a fenceline and in early spring sprouted exuberant growth that had to be controlled. This entailed a much higher, stronger trellis that doubled our crop. The resultant mixed berry wine was great, not in the same class as blackberry but for that you'd have to now move to Tasmania, where blackberries are tolerated and enjoyed.

During this time we tried other ingredients. Lemon balm wine proved to be light and lemony, but with a slight oily aftertaste. However, it's said to make an excellent herbal liqueur.

HEALTHIER THAN YOU THOUGHT

Grapes are ideally suited to make wine as they are a complete fruit that ferments to a wine. Berries are good, but not perfect for a healthy drink, so we add a three-litre bottle of pure dark grape juice to every 10 litres of wine. This not only extends our wine, but also adds essential trace minerals, malic acid, vitamin C, tannin and resveratrol found mainly in

red grape skins. Resveratrol, an antioxidant polyphenol, shows great potential for health benefits and has been the subject of extensive medical research. It helps lessen coronary and arterial disease (arteriosclerosis), lowers blood pressure and assists the reduction of some cancers.

Red grape wine is made with grapes complete with skins, which are removed later when fermentation has finished. As a natural phenol, resveratrol acts to lower the fat content in the liver. A French study found that resveratrol in red wine promotes higher levels of 'good' cholesterol and helps prevent strokes. In addition, consuming two glasses of wine a day is said to protect against *Helicobacter pylori*, a bacteria implicated in the cause of peptic ulcers, gastric cancer and numerous other ailments. Even applied topically (on skin, not drunk) to herpes simplex, it produces an improvement against the virus.

The Japanese have discovered that grape skins contain an antifungal compound (this is likely to be resveratrol as well). These are just some of resveratrol's recently discovered benefits. Dark grape juice contains just as much as red wine and is preferred if alcohol is not desired, as for children.

Of course, no alcohol should be taken with any medication. Excessive alcohol inhibits the body's uptake of calcium and can act as a poison against the heart and other vital organs. Human body chemistry breaks down alcohol to form toxic acetaldehyde. To guard against this alcohol build-up, the Japanese can wear arm patches that warn of drunkenness and possible body damage. Too bad if they blearily study a wound dressing on their arm instead of the 'drunk-patch'.

People whose body slowly metabolises the ethanol in low-alcohol drinks obtain the benefit of a reduced risk of heart attack. Wine is a good source of the anti-cancer compound, ellagic acid. All good reasons for low-alcohol drinks.

If organically grown produce cannot be obtained to make wine, never fear. The fermentation process greatly nullifies any agricultural chemicals within the fruit. Researchers found that contamination was reduced to negligible levels by filtering and other processes during wine making.

To suppress weeds in our gardens and orchard we use flattened cardboard boxes under mulch. Boron is used in cardboard manufacture and a small amount leaches into the soil to be taken up by grapes and other crops. This trace boron helps women maintain their level of oestrogen essential for calcium absorption and bone density.

WINE-MAKING TIPS

A great variety of garden and orchard produce may be used for wine stock, in fact almost any produce that is sound, fully ripe and chemical-free is suitable. Sweet garden fruits can be made into jams, which, if not used, can later become a base stock for wine. Many fruits and vegetables contain pectin which can cloud otherwise good wine. However, an enzyme called pectinase is used to eliminate this problem. If grains are used to make wines, use amylase to eliminate the haze.

To clear a cloudy wine, add a small quantity of finings (usually calcium carbonate). We make our own clarifier from eggshells. Clean and boil shells, let cool, then remove membrane. Dry shells and grind into fine powder. Store in an airtight jar. Just a sprinkle on top of cloudy wine will clear it in a few days. Siphon off clear wine and discard the sediment into the worm farm or compost heap as an activator.

Red wine matures best in large bottles and never in clear glass as light impairs the colour and quality of a wine. We cover our bottles with terry towel hoods.

Homemade wine can be enhanced with nutmeg, sage, ginger, orange peel, chamomile, rosemary, cloves, cinnamon or even chilli. Lavender will tint a light-coloured wine to mauve and impart a slight fragrance.

It's not usually necessary, but it is easier to sweeten a wine than the reverse. Simply add a small amount of sugar in solution after racking. I boil 450 grams white sugar in 600 millilitres water. Cool before adding.

Use only white sugar in wine making as raw or brown sugar affects taste. Stand seven days then sample.

For vegetable wines the same basic recipe (as below) may be used, but pectinase is replaced by amylase.

Cleanliness is most important. All tools and containers must be sterilised at each stage. I wash every item in a solution of four tablespoons washing soda and one tablespoon liquid bleach in half a bucket of warm water. Never use detergent and avoid chlorinated town water (which must be stood overnight before use). Sterilising solution to rinse

Youngberries are prolific growers and make good wine, especially with added grape juice.

bottles before filling is one teaspoon sulphite powder in 500 millilitres cold water. Discard when it no longer smells. Add one teaspoon of sterilising solution to each 4.5 litres of wine after racking. Supplies can be purchased from home brew outlets.

Sterilised plastic 5 or 10 litre spring water containers can be used in wine making as long as the air hole is resealed with clear silicone sealant. Standard half-gallon bungs usually fit the opening. Any remnant waters or minerals should be removed from the containers. We vigorously shake a handful of clean sand in water to scrub the insides. Any stain in pre-used glass bottles can be removed with sand, as above, or with the addition of a short length of small steel chain.

For stubborn stains try a weak bleach solution and stand overnight, then wash thoroughly and sterilise.

BERRY WINE

3½ – 4 kg ripe berries

boiled water to make up to 10 lt of liquid

1 packet wine yeast

3 kg sugar

1 tsp nutrient powder

3 lt bottle red grape juice that contains no preservatives, artificial colours or additives

juice of 1 lemon or 1 tsp citric acid powder

1 tsp pectinase

Campden tablets

finings

Remove leaves and stems. Gently crush and boil berries in water till soft. Let cool then put through a juice extractor or sieve.

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Bottles are covered to keep out the light and prevent deterioration of colour and quality.

Prepare yeast: in sterile jar put yeast, 1 teaspoon sugar and 1 teaspoon nutrient, some of the cool boiled liquid with some grape juice. Cover and stand in a warm place till frothy (about 20 minutes).

Pour grape liquor into sterile large-mouth container. Add grape juice, lemon juice or citric acid, pectinase, prepared yeast and remaining sugar. Stir well. Fit sterile airlock and rubber bung.

Stand container in warm place, but not direct sunlight, till fermentation ceases. Shake each day or stir with a sterile tool. Ensure no metal comes in contact with wines.

Now it is time to rack the immature wine into sterile bottles. I use a sterilised length of plastic tube to siphon the liquid, leaving the thick sediment. Add one crushed Campden tablet to each bottle of the young wine, add cold boiled water to fill bottles within 40 millimetres of the top and fit cleaned and sterilised bung and airlock. I cover each bottle with a terry towel cover. The wine may begin to ferment again.

Store in a cool, dark place for six months, longer if possible. Rack again into bottles, top up with cold boiled water and cork. If wine is cloudy (haze), leave in the larger container and add 1 teaspoon of finings. Stand seven days to clear then rack wine again.

SIDE BENEFITS

Lees, the sediment from the first filtering, are yeasty fruit remains that are a healthy addition to morning cereals. Remove any pips. May be frozen. This sediment is a good basis for chutneys and fruit-based sauces. We also use excess lees as a beneficial compost activator and earthworm food. Whenever this yeasty mixture is added to their boxes worms immediately come to the surface to feed.

Fermentation of wine releases carbon dioxide, which promotes plant growth in our greenhouse. For this reason we store young wine in our conservatory.

A glass or two of red wine daily, or homemade fruit wine made from healthy organic produce with dark grape juice added, is all that is required for a healthy and unique beverage, one that brings with it the special scents and tastes of your garden's delights. But remember, never drink alcohol to quench a thirst, not more than two glasses a day, and don't imbibe if you feel you 'must'. If, after reading this article, you still need good reasons to make low-alcohol homemade wines with health benefits and great tastes, consider that your wine contains no artificial colouring, preservatives or flavouring, or taxes!

We all know that Australians have too many health and social problems from high-alcohol drinks and they pay the world's highest wine tax for the privilege. Convert to the low-alcohol alternative and save your health and your money.

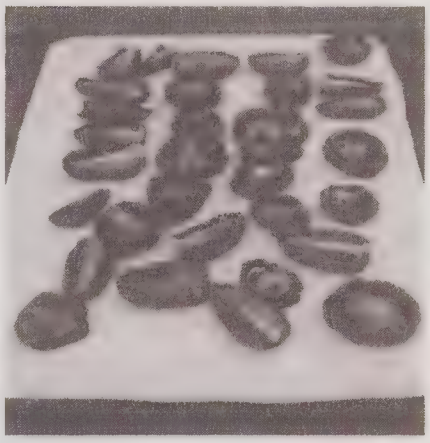
Dry Your Tomatoes

by Holly White, Karangi, NSW.

Each year I get snowed under with tomatoes and feel cross that I let fruit just rot on the plants. As fresh is best, and that's the main reason I garden, I want to be more proactive about preserving the crop. I bottle tomatoes and do a few jars of purée, and recently tried my hand at drying them. The results weren't successful, but readers could learn from my failure, which could be avoided by following instructions closely.

A search of my recipe box elicited directions for drying tomatoes. I suspect they were not written by a cook or gardener who had actually done it. While it is not a difficult project, there are a couple of steps that should be followed. The first is to listen to the weather report and choose a week when you will have clear, high heat. My first lot of tomatoes went mouldy and had to be composted because I tried to dry them early in the season and the weather was variable and daily temperatures not high enough.

Choose really ripe tomatoes because they will have the best flavour. Wash and cut into halves. Best use of your time is to dry all the tomato pieces in a given drying period, say three days, without stragglers needing extra time. To achieve this make all the pieces the same thickness. My directions didn't specify this, so I started with halves varying from 2.5 to 4 centimetres thick. Next time I'll slice the very large tomatoes in quarters or more as they are too thick if halved.



You need an oven tray or a disused window screen to dry them on, but ensure it's of a size that is easy to bring indoors each evening. I chose the oven tray and covered it with clean cheesecloth, pinned firm. In the past I tried oven foil, but the tomatoes pieces stuck to it and were difficult to remove.

Arrange the tomato halves on this tray and set it up in a safe place on the deck or verandah where it will catch optimum sun. Cover the slices with a clean net curtain to keep flies and visiting birds out. Visit the op shop if you don't have a piece of curtain net.

Aim to complete drying in two to three days. When the temperature is high this is possible. Bring in each evening and turn over the pieces. The moisture in the air at night and early morning isn't compatible with drying fruit or veg, hence it's important to bring the tray indoors.

If it rains or becomes overcast, you will need to finish the drying in the oven. Provided the temperature is really low, and it must be if you want to avoid cooking the tomato halves, the cheesecloth on the tray should not combust. I didn't take the risk: I transferred the halves onto a baking tray, but the oven must have been too warm as the thin slices browned. The thick slices, of course, were still not fully dried. The halves are perfectly done when they feel dry and look shrivelled, but retain some flexibility. If they are brittle, you've let them dry too long.

Store the tomato halves in wide-necked jars covered with olive oil. Add some dried black peppercorns and dried basil leaves. Cover with a self-sealing lid and store in a cool dark cupboard. Once opened it's sensible to keep them in the fridge. Should the oil appear cloudy or smell wrong, or you feel concerned about the appearance of the tomatoes, toss the contents: your tomato halves may have been insufficiently dried.

Once you taste your own sundried tomatoes you may not want to buy commercially produced ones again. Beg, barter or grow your own tomatoes and get ready for the hot drying days ahead.

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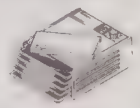

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A Versatile Volcano

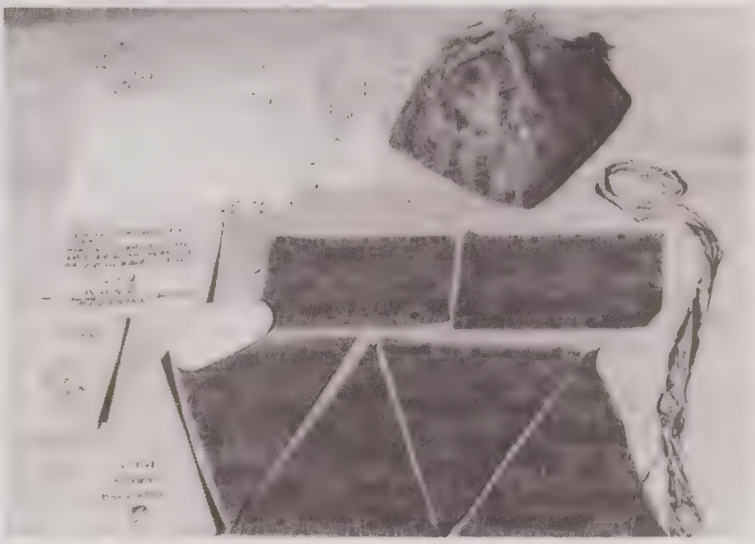
by Dianne Jackson, Valhalla.

It could be a paperweight. Add some cord and you have a plumb bob. To a child this volcano can be a pretty bag for a game of catch. When it is not being any of these things, you have a novel and practical doorstop.

We use all sorts of objects to hold a door open. I remember my grandmother held her front door back with a painted plaster Cocker Spaniel. She said Grandad won it for marksmanship at a sideshow shooting gallery. My mother preferred a brick covered in moth-eaten felt. For many years I stubbed my toes on whatever was handy and heavy enough to do the job.

For a long while I used a small boulder of attractive pink and black rhodonite, till Neville replaced it with an anvil made from a short length of railway line, this was later followed by a billet of firewood. I tried a 'Mrs Potts' iron, but it was so light that wind caught the door and the iron moved to become a trap to trip the unwary. I tried one of those dainty wooden wedges and found they damage paintwork when they jam under doors, and are often just too small. Fancy and expensive metal spring-loaded stoppers I found difficult to release in gumboots, if and when they worked properly.

I decided to design a doorstop that stayed put and didn't painfully stub toes, one that didn't jam or damage paintwork and was quick and simple to move. It had to be attractive, yet easy to make for very little money.



This simple volcano has a multitude of uses and is a great way to recycle leftover fabric.

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

- card or cereal box to make pattern
- ruler, pencil and scissors
- about ¼ metre of material with a small print that perhaps reminds you of tropical jungle or a mountainside
- lengths of embroidery floss in black, red, yellow, lemon and orange, cut each colour 105 cm long
- filling of washed dry shell grit or small round pebbles

You can buy tiny plastic balls of toy filling in craft shops for $4.50 for 500 grams, enough for two volcanoes. Seeds are not a good idea. They can attract pests. If seeds become wet, they will swell, perhaps develop mould and burst the seams.

- large funnel
- sliver of soap with thin edge
- sewing cotton, darning needle and sewing needle

MAKE A VOLCANO

The volcano can be sewn by hand using small close stitches. On a sewing machine, set the stitch length to a small stitch, 2.5 to 3.

Pattern

First, prepare your pattern on cardboard. Draw a rectangle 18 x 10 centimetres and cut it out. Write on it: base, cut 2. On one long side mark a dot four centimetres from each end and transfer these dots to fabric when cutting out.

Draw an 18-centimetre square. Mark a dot at top centre (nine centimetres). Draw from this point to bottom corners, creating a triangle. Cut out triangle and write on it: sides, cut 4.

All seam allowances are included.

Place a triangle pattern along the grain or weave of material. Check printed design is right way up from base. Mark around edges with thin edge of the soap sliver. Soap is easier to use than pencil as you simply rub softly to correct any mistakes. Besides, soap is always available and washes out. Repeat till you have four triangles.

Next, place a base rectangle on the fabric and mark around edges with soap and cut out. Then cut a second base piece. Remember to transfer dots onto these pieces.

You now have six pieces of fabric cut out.

Sewing Up The Pieces

Put two fabric triangles together, right sides facing. Pin along one long edge. Before stitching, you might like to stretch the fabric between these pins to create an uneven wavy edge so it will look more like a real volcano when filled. Begin the seam one centimetre from bottom edge and stitch until you are 15 millimetres from the point, then backstitch. Repeat with remaining two triangles. Join this triangle pair the same way.

Finger-press seams open and fold back points to create a small hole. Set aside and prepare the base.

Right sides facing, join along the marked long edge by stitching to first marked dot, then backstitch. Move to the second marked dot, backstitch and continue stitching to the end. Finger-press seam open. With triangle top and base inside out, pin base to volcano, matching each corner of the base with a triangle seam.

With base uppermost, stitch around edge, carefully turning at corners. Pull through opening in base to turn right side out.

To Make A Tassel

Cut a rectangle 17 x 6 centimetres out of card. Fold the 17-centimetre side in half and mark fold: top. Thread darning needle with 20 centimetres of cotton thread and set aside. Match an end of each colour in embroidery floss. Begin at bottom edge and hold firmly with your thumb as you wind up over the top then down and around till all the floss is wound on.

Pass darning needle under floss near top of cardboard and tie off securely. Next, insert scissors between edges of card at bottom and cut across floss. With a second 20-centimetre length of thread, securely tie across neck of tassel, but do not cut off. Use this second thread to carefully pull tassel through opening at top of triangles till just the floss shows. With needle and cotton, firmly stitch through tassel and material to close hole and make tassel secure.

Turn volcano upside down, insert funnel through opening in base and pour in filling. Do not overfill. Stitch opening closed with small firm stitches.

If the volcano comes apart at the seams, small children might try to eat the filling, so make a secure closure. Tease out tassel.

Your volcano is now ready to use.

To Finish Off

If you are fortunate enough to find light coloured material with a brick-like printed pattern, an Egyptian pyramid or Mayan temple might suggest itself. Of course, any pattern can readily be drawn with a waterproof pen. Iron your artwork to set the ink.

These items make excellent housewarming gifts. As postage is now so expensive, an unfilled volcano is so lightweight it can be posted flat. It is a delightful and novel gift for overseas friends.

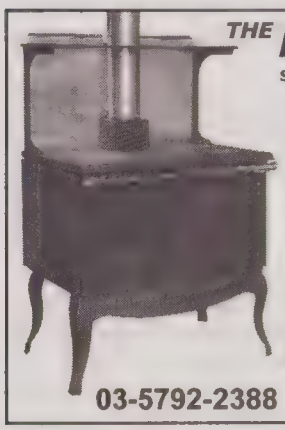
I have used several volcanoes to hold dress patterns firmly on fabric. This made cutting out much easier.

Perhaps best of all, no more stubbed toes and, because of their special shape, they really do keep doors open.

CRAFTY TIPS

• If you need to transport a thick floor rug, never fold or force it into a small box – this weakens the fabric, creating points for wear and tear. Instead, just store it in a roll – easy!

• If you've short fingernails, picking up the warps to thread them can be terribly difficult. A good solution is to use a guitar player's finger pick, found in musical instrument shops.



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Reach For The Sunflowers

by Dorothy Creevey, Old Bonalbo, NSW.

This spectacular sun-loving annual is often overlooked for planting in our gardens. Because the sunflower can grow from 60 centimetres to 4.5 metres tall, depending on the variety, we see it as needing too much space. However, before we condemn it as a space waster let's view it from a permaculture point of view.

A MULTITUDE OF USES

In permaculture we prefer our plants to have a minimum of three uses before we consider them worthy of space in the garden, so we need to look beyond the obvious. We might ask ourselves some of the following questions, which can also be applied to any other plant.

Is It Edible?

Sunflower seeds are a good source of nutrients for humans and animals. They can be used in cakes, biscuits and slices, eaten as nibbles or pressed to obtain salad or cooking oil. The seeds can be sprouted. Unopened heads can be eaten as a vegetable or mature seed heads cut and fed direct to poultry or rabbits. Seedcake residue can be fed to stock.

Does It Help The Soil?

Although the sunflower prefers a deep, rich, well-drained to dry soil, it will do quite well in poor ground from light sand to heavy clay. This makes it a good pioneer plant for poor soils where it will accumulate potassium, which may benefit a future crop that needs it. The stalks and leaves can provide useful mulch.

Does It Help With Pest Control?

It attracts lacewings and predatory mites and is said to deter fruit fly.

Does It Offer Physical Protection?

Plant sunflowers on the side fire is most likely to came from as the plant is fire resistant. Use it as a summer screen, shade or low windbreak or as a support for climbing beans.

Can It Produce A Profit?

Young cut blooms are great for home display or to sell. Different varieties produce large or small yellow, lemon, cream, orange or red flowers in late spring, summer and autumn. Better blooms are obtained if plants are fed with well-rotted manure. Dyes can be produced from the petals and seeds and its oil can be used for cooking as well as lighting and lubrication. Used in blends with linseed, the oil is suitable for paints and varnishes.

Can My Children Grow It?

Sunflowers are suitable for children's gardens as the large seeds are easy to handle, flowers are spectacular and within a few months they tower overhead and produce tasty seeds to munch. Grown in a teepee shape the stalks can make a cubby house. Seeds can be sprouted to let the children have an indoor garden and are very nutritious to eat.

Is It A Companion Plant?

Squash and cucumber are said to appreciate the shade cast by the tall sunflower plants.

What Other Qualities Does It Have?

Never overlook a plant's aesthetic qualities. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder; whatever you think of the attractiveness or otherwise of the flowers, they are certainly spectacular. Planted where they can be seen from a window, the flowers will attract a variety of birds and insects to delight the viewer.

Have you ever noticed the spiralling pattern of a sunflower seed head? It's said that this design collects maximum sunlight. Sounds to me like a good model for solar panels.

The plant's stalks and husks make good animal bedding.

Does It Cause Any Problems?

The sunflower's root exudates are said to inhibit the growth of some plants. Don't plant it near potatoes, for instance, as they slow each other's growth and it may make the potatoes more susceptible to root rot.

Some hybrid varieties may not sprout or grow true to form and seed shells may be empty.

It may surprise you to know that sunflowers are related to yacon, Jerusalem

artichoke and ragweed. People allergic to ragweed should be cautious of eating sunflowers and their relatives.

PLANTING

Plant sunflowers in a sunny position in spring or early summer. Quite good results are obtained if seeds are scattered over the soil and lightly raked in, but for uniform planting, make rows 50 centimetres apart for dwarf varieties and 60 centimetres for tall varieties. Seedlings can be transplanted if necessary. Although quite drought resistant, sunflowers will produce better when watered at intervals.

SUNFLOWERS IN THE DIET

Containing B group vitamins, phosphorus, iodine and selenium, sunflowers are well worth a place in our diet. Few, however, will be growing them for their culinary delights because of the difficulty of dehusking. For the dedicated few I have a couple of suggestions on how to dehusk.

• Leave the seeds in the sun for a week or two before putting them into a bag and running it through an old-fashioned washer wringer.

• Place a cup of seeds into a blender and process at a slow speed for a few seconds or until most are cracked. Empty onto a flat plate and gently blow them while shaking. Now tip the remainder into a bowl of water and skim off the husks.

For myself, I think that with the money saved by feeding them to the animals, I will purchase some already dehusked and try the following recipes.

Sunflower Buds and Sprouts

Sunflower buds can be eaten like artichokes. Seeds can be sprouted for the greens; harvest by snipping with scissors.

Sunflower Biscuits

¾ cup wholemeal SR flour
1¼ cups rolled oats
lge handful raisins or sultanas
2 handfuls sunflower seeds
½ tsp bicarb soda
4 heaped tbsp butter
⅓ cup honey

Mix flour, rolled oats, sultanas, sunflower seeds and bicarb in a large bowl. Melt butter and honey. Mix butter mixture into dry ingredients. Place heaped teaspoonfuls onto baking trays. Bake in a slow to moderate oven for 10 – 20 minutes. Makes about three dozen.

Add 2 heaped teaspoons carob powder to the melted butter to make an interesting variation.

Sour Cream Sunflower Pie

3 eggs, separated
1 cup white sugar
¼ cup cornflour
230 ml sour cream
¼ tsp vanilla essence
¼ tsp salt
½ cup brown sugar
1 cup sunflower kernels
1 baked 23 cm pie shell
whipped cream and extra kernels

Filling: Mix egg yolks, sugar, cornflour, sour cream, vanilla essence and salt together. Cook over low heat until very thick (will change colour).

Topping: Beat egg whites until holding shape but not stiff or dry. Add brown sugar slowly. Fold in sunflower kernels. Pour filling into pie shell and top with sunflower mix. Bake at 160° C 15 – 20 minutes.

Serve with whipped cream and sunflower kernels.

Sunflower Sesame Salad

1 cup broccoli florets
1 cup cauliflower florets
125 g raw sunflower kernels
125 g tahini paste (sesame butter)
2 stalks celery, chopped
1 red capsicum, diced
½ cup lentil or mung bean sprouts
⅓ cup parsley, chopped
½ cup cabbage, shredded

Lightly steam broccoli and cauliflower. Grind sunflower seeds into a coarse meal. Mix the sunflower meal and tahini to make a thick paste. Mix all vegetables together. Pour the paste over mixture and either leave as is or mix through.

Sunflower Sesame Dressing

¼ cup sesame seeds
¼ cup sunflower seeds
1 or 2 carrots, roughly chopped
juice of 1 lemon
1 tbsp honey
1 tbsp parsley
vegetable stock, to taste
water

Process sesame seeds finely before adding sunflower seeds, reprocess. Add carrots, juice, honey and seasonings. Blend well. Add water to desired consistency and a little vegetable stock if necessary.

Sunflower Milk

This is suitable for anyone with a milk allergy and for vegans.

500 ml water
5 pitted dates
4 tbsp sunflower seeds.

Blend all together in a food processor. Add carob powder to taste for a variation.

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For The Love Of Dogs

by Nan Lloyd, Darkan, WA.

We have seven dogs. Many people would think: what on earth do you need that many dogs for? Well, four of them are work dogs, although Trixie at 14 is retired and has taken up eating as her main hobby. As a young dog she was always thin and a fussy eater, but now she is starting to look a little like a coffee table. She is happy though, and seems in good health, in spite of being almost totally deaf. This means we must check under vehicles before we drive off in case she is underneath or, as she often is, lying behind the back wheel. The other work dogs are Dolly, Pep and Milo, all three years old and under.

Years ago we had work dogs which were never trained properly and sort of learnt as they went along, but after attending a sheep dog training clinic I decided that we needed to train them properly. I keep a few practice sheep around to train them on and we now have dogs that are really useful and I have discovered great enjoyment in training them. However, as I am the one who trains them, hubby and in-laws are unable to work them properly, so when they want a dog to help I have to be there too.

I don't mind this usually, but being the trainer I get into trouble when the dog does the wrong thing. Often, if the pressure is on in the sheep yard, things get a bit stressful and some swearing and yelling happens. For example: 'Get the dogs into the sheep, they are going too slow . . . No! No! You are pushing them too fast now, slow the dogs down'.

Sometimes you can't win and occasionally I take my dogs and depart quietly. You need a sense of humour and lots of patience for training and working sheepdogs.

We don't actually train the dog to work sheep, they already know that. We train the dog to respond to certain commands and to be obedient (reasonably anyway) so we can put the sheep where we want them. Sometimes though, the dog really does know best and can see things we can't, such as the look on the face of an old ewe just before she makes a break for it. So occasionally we say nothing and let the dog do the job.

Milo is a great heading dog, which means she loves to head and turn the sheep, and is fast and strong. However, sometimes when we just want her to drive the sheep from behind she can get a little bored. She will push them along nicely for a while, then decide she should be at the head of them, so around she goes, much to the annoyance of hubby and in-laws. There's usually no harm done and she will go right around to the other side so I can redirect her to her driving task again. She also loves to round up the other dogs. When we have our daily exercise and I let all the dogs out together she spends the whole time madly racing around trying to round up the other dogs at top speed. I am always worried she will hit a tree or something else (me or another dog, for instance), but so far she hasn't. Pep finds it annoying and occasionally, with a warning growl, she charges at Milo. Milo is way too fast though and is gone in a flash. It used to annoy me too, but I decided that it is her free time and she can do as she likes (within reason) as long as she works the sheep when she is supposed to.

Pep is a Koolie and has always been a mad keen working dog. She will work till she drops and in the early stages had to be persuaded to stop for a drink occasionally. She is slowing down a little now and developing into a handy dog. There were times though when I was tempted to give up on her. She would get so fixated on the sheep that if one broke free she would run it down and I could not call her back no matter what. After she put one into the dam (it swam out later) and another one so far under the shearing shed I had to crawl in to get it back, I limited her sheep work to a small yard until she was a little more controllable. She is still very hyper though. I suppose if she were a child she would be labelled ADHD. She needs, and gets, lots of exercise.

Dolly is my best dog, calm and controllable (most of the time anyway). She is the one I use to quietly move big mobs of sheep, or bring in a few wild hoggets (one-year-old sheep) that have escaped into the gully or somewhere

they were not supposed to be. She's a little stubborn at times, but eager to please. She was so small when we got her she sat inside my boot on the way home. She is now just 12 kilograms, fairly small for a Kelpie, but it doesn't affect her working ability, except at times she lacks the legs to head a fast-moving mob.

My other three dogs are all retrievers. One Golden Retriever-Labrador cross (Shampy), one purebred Goldie (Jazz), and one Curly Coated Retriever (Silky).

Retrievers are wonderful dogs, friendly and lovable, but bounding with energy. Mine in particular are more energetic than most, probably due to the company they keep. Retrievers are also scavengers and often during their paddock run they find something horrible and unrecognisable to bring home. One day Jazz found a particularly delicious old sheep's leg, or some such thing, and proudly carted it home. It was a warm day so she decided to swim in the dam on the way. Not wanting to leave her bone in case it was stolen by another dog, she took it into the water where she dropped it and it disappeared into the depths. Jazz simply had to have it back so dived down after it. At one stage she disappeared completely and I thought I would have to dive in after her. However, she surfaced proudly, bone in mouth, and proceeded the rest of the way home.

My Curly Coat is a lovely natured dog, always happy and pleased to see anyone. Despite that, she is a good watchdog and will run out barking at any visitors. She is a big dog and can look a little scary. She also does a number of clever tricks and loves to show off. Being a retriever though, she used to retrieve my chooks, and unfortunately killed a couple. I think they died of fright as there were no teeth marks. She has since learnt that the chooks are out of bounds, although sometimes can't resist a grab at one if it runs past flapping.

Well-trained dogs are an important asset on the farm, their faithful company is a bonus.

Shampy is 11 and is starting to slow down a little. A lovely gentle dog, but undoubtedly the leader of my pack. No other dog would dare take her bone and she never needs to do more than growl to get compliance. A very useful dog in her day, her favourite job was running down errant sheep or lambs. Occasionally, when we muster a paddock there is the odd sheep or lamb that won't come in with the mob so must be caught and brought home on the ute. Shampy always knew when she was needed and would leap off the ute as soon as she saw the escapee, running it down and holding on until we got there. It was the highlight of her life and I guess it was an exaggerated form of retrieving. She would never bother the sheep at other times, but would occasionally work in the sheep yards chasing the sheep into the race until she got bored and would go and lie down in the corner.

I dread her passing. I will miss her terribly. It is a sad thing that dogs live such short lives and we must say goodbye to four or more in our lifetimes. Still, we must enjoy their company while we have them and make the most of the selfless joy they give us.

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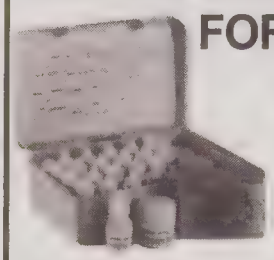

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Neat Feet

by Megg Miller, Nagambie, Vic.

Trimming hooves is necessary to prevent lameness and foot problems in both sheep and goats. The outer horny exterior of the hoof grows like human nails and while animals in the wild are able to keep this growth under control through walking on hard, rocky paths, domestic sheep and goats rely on their owners for regular pedicures.

Hooves consist of two 'toes', each one covered with hard horn-like material and with soles of softer more pliable material. Both soles and hoof walls are capable of growing out of control if not trimmed intermittently.

Hoof trimming isn't an activity animals like, so be prepared to immobilise the sheep or goat by tying it up to a fence and even having a second pair of hands to help. Goats are generally more accommodating than sheep. Trimming is easiest if carried out a couple of days after rain when the hooves are softer. In summer, black-hooved British breeds of sheep with their naturally strong hooves virtually require bolt cutters to do the job. Plan the task for autumn and spring and it will be less exhausting for owner and beast.

Why do you need to trim hooves? Animals must have good feet and legs to get around paddocks so they can access feed. As well, there is tremendous pressure on the hooves of pregnant animals, especially in the final weeks. Rams and bucks also need good feet if they are to mount their female flock and score a high fertility rate. Let hooves deteriorate and your venture will lose out because animals will drop in condition or develop foot problems.

TRIMMING PROCEDURE

It's worth purchasing a pair of hoof trimmers from a produce store to do this job. Secateurs can be used, but are less successful. The first step is to ease the point of the cutters under any folded-over wall horn and push out trapped dirt and manure. Then trim off the hoof wall overgrowth. It's easier if you're conservative and take a couple of small cuts rather than trying to do a single big one. Trim off the overgrown heel next, so you're left with a clear view of the sole of the 'toe'. It's usually necessary to trim the pointy front of the toe too.

Be prepared for splits in the side of the hoof wall or soft smelly debris that has crept up the side of the hoof wall. The more wall that can be cut when this occurs the better, but don't cut too deeply or you'll draw blood.

Look at the sole and lightly pare off any sections that are uneven. The sole is like tough plastic to cut, but be cautious; if pink areas appear do not continue cutting. Some hooves may be so damaged by neglect that you will never be able to make the sole perfectly flat, but more regular and less severe hoof treatment may see an improvement.

When finished, put the foot down and examine how the animal is standing – an even, well-trimmed hoof allows the animal to stand squarely. In other words, body weight is evenly distributed between the heel portion of the sole and the wall edge of the hoof.

Goats have small horny protuberances above the back of the hoof, known as claws. These also grow and can become long and twisted and may require trimming.

In sheep there is a correlation between abscesses and tiny fissures or cracks in the hoof wall. These are believed to allow the entry of opportunistic pathogens that cause toe abscess, so it is important to trim sheep's hooves prior to winter to minimise this problem.

Top: Hooves on sheep and goats will become overgrown, as depicted, if not occasionally trimmed.
Second: Buy or borrow hoof cutters and start with the overgrown hoof wall.
Third: Trimmed feet should have an even sole and well cut walls of the hoof.
Fourth: Claws may need trimming too.
Bottom: The finished hoof (right) is block shaped while the overgrown left one looks pointy like elf's shoes!

Livestock Health and Management

Information You Need but Haven't Known Where to Ask

If you have queries on any type of livestock send them in and we'll get our panel of experts to research the problem for you. Post them to Livestock Advice Page, Grass Roots, PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

TROUBLE WITH TICKS

I've had endless trouble with ticks, first with our Maremma dog and more recently on goat kids. I'm hoping northern readers will read this and share their solutions to this problem. My acreage runs alongside bushland and as well there are blackberries and other dense bushes along the banks of a creek that runs through one of the paddocks. The Maremma was great at keeping wild dogs and foxes out, but despite wearing a tick collar and daily checking she needed hospitalisation at one stage and later collapsed and couldn't be revived. The adult goats are fine, I often see them rubbing themselves against fence posts, but the kids are very vulnerable. At present I'm putting tick collars on them at the vet's advice, but some alternative suggestions would be appreciated. Changing over to sheep isn't a possibility as the dog problem is bad and without the Maremma the goats have fared better. At this stage I don't want to go into cattle. Thanks for a great mag.

JT,
GREENBANK 4124.

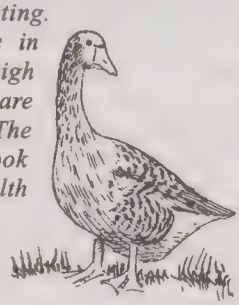
We hope some readers will have useful suggestions for you. Generally, ticks seem to congregate in the head region, so make that area the priority when checking. If one is found, there is a high chance more will be present. Examining paddocks as distinct from pet grounds isn't likely to be easy, but regular yarding and running through the race will accustom stock to the procedure. Keep the metho bottle handy and dab ticks you find and then remove with fingernails. Ensure the stock have access to a good mineral lick so they're in nutritional health. In 'Farming Meat Goats', reviewed last issue, the author Barbara Vincent described success in reducing cattle tick populations when allowing guinea fowl to wander in paddocks and eat tick larvae. This might be a practical starting point. Good luck.

GANDER'S WINGS

Our gander moulted early and when the feathers grew back his wings were twisted and unable to sit close to his body like the wings on his geese. What has gone wrong?

Jacqui Duff,
QUEANBEYAN 2620.

Twisted wing is not uncommon in geese, but is more frequently found on fast-growing, greedy goslings. It is believed to be associated with a very high protein intake, but there is often a hereditary aspect too. You can tape goslings' wings and give them support for a couple of weeks and they will turn out indistinguishable from siblings not suffering this problem. Perhaps your gander encountered this hiccup when it was young, hence its reappearance. Look at the feed you're providing and see if it could have contributed to the wing twisting. Grower rations in particular are high in protein, so are not desirable. The gander will look odd, but his health and state of mind should not be adversely affected.



HAPPY BROODIES

We read a letter on this page in GR issue re poor hatchability which set bells ringing. We've improved sanitation, regularly dust for lice and check to see mites haven't moved in and got our vet to obtain a vitamin and mineral supplement. Thanks GR, for the first time in years we've had a good breeding season. The broody hens are happy too.

Jo & Mike,
SCONE 2337.

INCUBATORS
12 & 24 EGG Cova-tuttos
12 egg man turn $180
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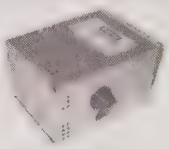
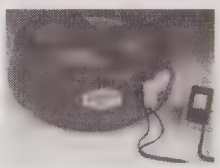
plus delivery

FOOD DEHYDRATOR
Steel cabinet, plastic trays,
fan-forced air with 2 heaters.
$250 plus delivery

KETCH-ALL
multi-catch mouse trap
2 for $77, 4 for $132
plus delivery
till end of Jan 2006





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■ WA POULTRY EQUIPMENT ■ 1170 Baldivis Rd, Baldivis 6171. Ph: 1300-881-170.
Fax: 08-9524-1716 Email: grandview@primus.com.au Website: www.wapoultryequipment.com

ECO NEWS

GREENING THE GAMES

The Melbourne Commonwealth Games is aiming to be the most environmentally friendly ever, with major tree planting already undertaken around the state to make the event carbon neutral. Other environmental benefits include the creation of wetlands near the village to filter urban pollutant runoff into Port Phillip Bay, a clean-up of the Yarra River and the city generally and the replanting of habitat areas for the Games mascot, the red-tailed black cockatoo.

The houses in the village itself are constructed to a six-star energy rating, have utilised much recycled material from the site, have rainwater tanks and solar-boosted gas hot water services, use greywater to flush the toilets and have AAA-rated taps and other water fittings. The accommodation has been designed with windows that are double-glazed and positioned to take advantage of natural light. Many of the dwellings use inverted walls, where the inside walls are brick or concrete and the outside are plasterboard, for thermal efficiency. Roof vents and insulation further improve the temperature comfort for the occupants as well as reducing energy use. Street lights around the village are operated by large grid-interactive photovoltaic cells that collect solar energy during the day and feed it back to run the lights at night.

The landscaping around the Village has incorporated drought-tolerant native trees, shrubs and grasses which will require little or no irrigation. A number of the established eucalypts around the site were left in place and incorporated into the design.

SUPPORT FOR GOULDIANS

Four decades ago a young man in the UK saw some Gouldian finches in a pet shop in Manchester and was instantly attracted to these lively, colourful birds. A successful business career enabled Mike Fiddler to later contribute large sums of money (guessed to be in the millions) to research into and conservation of the vastly diminished wild populations of this formerly prolific bird. There were once probably hundreds of thousands of Gouldians whose habitat was the vast areas of savannah woodland across northern Australia's tropics. Now numbers in the wild are estimated to be about 2000 in scattered remnant flocks.

The declining population was first noticed about 30 years ago, initially in Queensland and then the NT, followed by WA. The east to west pattern of decline is thought by researchers to mirror changing fire regimes and the spread of cattle grazing. The ancient fire regime of burns over comparatively small areas left a patchy mosaic of vegetation that enhanced biodiversity. Modern fire regimes that burn thousands of hectares at a time devastate food and habitat resources over huge areas and result in declining biodiversity. Other birds and small marsupials that depend on native grass seeds are also affected, with declining populations of Carpentaria rock rats, Carpentaria grass wrens and partridge pigeons being noted.

The spread of introduced pastures and cattle grazing that restricts regrowth of surviving native grasses contribute to changing the ecosystem that once supported the Gouldian and vast numbers of other fauna.

Current research is hoping to prove that land management practices incorporating a patchy fire regime will contribute to increasing biodiversity and a more optimistic future for the Gouldians and other rangeland wildlife. The private sponsorship has been and continues to be an integral part of the ongoing research.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Even something as basic to our lives as operating a hot water system produces greenhouse gas. However, the simple choice of a gas system over an electric one, even a solar-boosted electric system, will lessen emissions quite considerably. For example, an average electric hot water system produces nearly five tonnes of greenhouse gas per year, while even a two-star-rated gas system produces only 1.6 tonnes.

Anyone wanting to calculate their vehicle's or household's greenhouse emissions can visit a new website launched by the Men of the Trees Carbon Neutral Program. The program enables you to contribute money for sufficient trees to be planted to neutralise your carbon dioxide emissions. Though the best long-term strategy for reducing greenhouse gases is to reduce emissions in the first place, tree planting will sequester carbon dioxide in the short to medium term as well as having many other environmental benefits.

For more information about home energy options visit: www.yourhome.gov.au To calculate your greenhouse gas emissions go to: www.carbonneutral.com.au

SEA LEVEL CHANGES

Glaciers in Alaska and Canada cover about 90,000 square kilometres and make up 13 percent of the world's mountain glacier area. Melting Alaskan glaciers are a major contributor to rising sea levels, about 0.14 of a millimetre per year over the past 40 years. Since 1995, however, the rate has increased to 0.27 of a millimetre per year, nearly double the amount of water entering the ocean from the Greenland ice sheet. A recent forecast by the CSIRO predicts a rise in the world's sea levels of from 9 to 88 centimetres by the year 2100.

In one of those tricks of nature, it has been discovered that the gas and particles entering the atmosphere from volcanic eruptions has the effect of temporarily cooling the ocean and offsetting the rise in sea level caused by the greenhouse effect. Sea level rises by expansion of the ocean because of warming and from meltwater from glaciers and ice sheets entering the ocean. Because of the larger heat capacity of the oceans compared with the atmosphere, the cooling effect of volcanic eruptions can last for decades after the eruption and mask the overall rise in sea level caused by climate change.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR Friends,

Long time, no write. Many things have happened since I last wrote to you. Sadly, we had to sell our Gatton property. Bri just couldn't find permanent work in the area and we decided to go back to the coal mines. Luckily, the property was bought by Bri's mum, so is still in the family. Bri and I tied the knot in a wonderful backyard ceremony in our new location – Mackay. We were only renting, but still had the time of our lives. Since the wedding (two years in November 2005), we've bought our own home. The gardens, while being totally 'established', are mainly palms and the soil seems to be mostly sand. It needs a lot of work. I'm doing heaps of pruning and my old mulcher is working overtime. We're back to a suburban block and in a tropical climate with severe water restrictions. The challenges are many and I'm loving it! Removing palms isn't that big a problem, removing palm roots is. I'll save the foxtails, but the coconut and Alexandras have got to go.

Now, SS from Port Pirie asked for, among other things, a recipe for an **AIR FRESHENER**. My recipe is simple and effective so I thought I'd share it with everybody: 1 tablespoon bicarb soda, 2 tablespoons white vinegar, 1 cup boiling water, 1 teaspoon essential oil. The choice of oil is up to you. Lavender is antiseptic and makes a great cooling spritz on a hot day. I use perfumed oils for my bedrooms. Use your favourite combination, the scent lingers for a while. In a spray bottle, mix bicarb and vinegar until bicarb is totally dissolved. Add oil of choice, then boiling water. Shake to mix. Keep refrigerated for best results. This mix is brilliant; it seems to dissolve all types of smells, probably because of the vinegar.

Terri Smith,
ANDERGROVE 4740.

Dear Grass Roots,

If there is a positive side to adversity, it is the resilience and resourcefulness of the human spirit in countering it. Like many small towns and farming communities in recent years, Home Hill has been overtaken by progress, which appears to have benefited the cities far more than the rural areas.

First the rice mill, a source of employment for many, closed. Then Home Hill lost its major banks. The tiny hospital has been threatened with closure often, but is still hanging on. The sugar industry, on which Home Hill was founded, is in dire straits. The drought is hitting hard, especially on small crop farmers in the area.

The Burdekin Shire Council, which governs Ayr, Brandon and Home Hill, responded to concerns throughout the district. A decision was made to focus on commercial and industrial development in Ayr, while Home Hill would cultivate the areas of tourism, backpacking and culture in the form of art and craft ventures. One of the first steps was to hold a Scottish weekend at Groper Creek. It was a smash hit and is now a yearly event. Many southerners come up to the little Groper Creek village for the fishing and simply for the laid-back lifestyle.

But the insurance dilemma was too much for the Home Hill Harvest Festival, a yearly celebration that the whole of the Burdekin area supported and which brought in much-needed capital. The people of Home Hill decided enough was enough. Spurred on by the impassioned rhetoric and tireless enthusiasm of local businessman and dedicated artist, Uli Liessmann, members and supporters of the Burdekin Art Society saw to it that Home Hill had a festival and this time it was held over 10 days, rather than just one weekend. In the closed section of the street where the festivities were concentrated there was barely enough space to jostle through the crowd. Seating was arranged to view performances, which varied from a fashion parade to singing to Greek dancing and more. Vacant shops were turned into art galleries showing local and out-of-town displays of painting, pottery, fibre crafts, fabric work, wood carving, plants and orchids. The works must have been appreciated, because red 'sold' spots popped up like measles on a 10 year old.

Food and drink such as cheese, salami and glasses of wine were free. All this was done on a budget of next to nothing, proving to everyone that Home Hill was on the right track and that it has much to commend it. Like other small towns, it offers a relaxed lifestyle, sunshine, cheap housing, many sporting facilities, great fishing, schools, a TAFE college and other assets. Ayr is only minutes away and Townsville an hour or so. Uli Liessmann was thrilled by the help he received, and the response, and is determined to do his utmost to draw new blood to the town. He is eager to hear from artists and craftspeople in particular, or others who feel they might contribute to creating a broader cultural base in the town. For further information about the Home Hill Art and Craft Festival, contact Uli Liessmann on 0439-822-064 or email: liessmann@tpg.com.au

Vanda Coyne,
3/97 Bamford Ln, KIRWAN 4817.

Dear Grass Roots,

I'm wondering if anyone has a copy of **'HOME BEAUTIFUL' JULY 1980** that they no longer have use for. I have a mudbrick home and am particularly after the article on the house owned by the McCullochs. I am trying to decorate my mudbrick home and am looking for pictures of interior decorations for muddies that are timeless. I need visual pictures as I'm not very good at 'what goes with what'. Thank you for everyone who integrates the mudbrick philosophy into their lifestyle.

Anne Batchelor,
Lot 3 McNeilly Rd, DROUIN 3818.

Dear Editors,

I have been looking around in bookshops for quite some time for a **SURVIVAL BOOK/BIBLE** that includes all basic survival needs, easily carried in packs or in boats or vans. By basic survival I mean starting from scratch – no tools, materials, electricity, petrols or sewerage – and creating a livable accommodation (wattle and daub or mudbrick and thatch roof). What foods are edible? How to prepare them? Livestock feed, gestations etc. In times of disaster, how would people know how to survive, how to find and prepare foods? This would mean mortar and pestle grinding of grains, or hand-operated tools and equipment, knowing how to build a home or shelter, a smokehouse and curing times of meats (no refrigeration).

It has been a hard task looking and finding nothing. Does anyone know of any publication that does describe all basic survival needs and basic techniques using nature's materials? I have compiled quite a lot of material, but so much is hard to obtain. If you know of a publication, or sources I can access to add to my information, I would appreciate it.

Graeme Sanders,
PO Box 10015, PINES FOREST 3200.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GRs,

When I came over here to Cambodia I said I would **SPEND SOME TIME AT AN ORPHANAGE** and do some volunteer work on my weekends. Well, on Sunday I did just that. I walked into an orphanage just up from where I live with a friend who also volunteers there. I walked up the stairs and was faced with 25 children, aged from a few months to teenage years, with beautiful big brown eyes and their arms outstretched just wanting a cuddle. It kind of blew me away as I fought back the tears. Around half the children had disabilities, but they still could communicate to me that they wanted to be touched or held. They have no toys and no place to go outside except for a very small and narrow verandah, fully exposed, at the front of the building. They are very well cared for and you could see they were loved by the Sisters of Mercy and their carers, but they have so little with which to care for the children. I wanted to tell you this little story as it just pulled at my heartstrings and has really made me realise that our children are so lucky to have toys and lots of love and cuddles in their lives. I will go each Saturday and Sunday for three hours while here. Maybe I can make a small difference to the children's lives, let's hope so. I will keep you posted.

Sandy Kelly,
PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA.

Sandy is keeping us up to date with her experiences in Cambodia. Her daily life is full of hazards, by our standards, but everyone she meets is very welcoming and supportive. Any readers wishing to send messages of support can email: sunshine_sandy63@hotmail.com

Dear GR People,

I want to share my delight and elation with you! We recently moved from Tasmania, to start a new life on **FIVE ACRES OF BUSHLAND IN BUNDABERG.** We are currently living in a small caravan – me, husband, child and two little dogs – in the humid, wet season, but couldn't be happier. We will be building a modest Colorbond home in the coming months. Nothing too flash, just comfortable and big enough for our needs. What excites me more than anything else (apart from the fact that I am finally warm) is I have five acres of land, all unspoiled, just ready for our family to do whatever we want to do with it. Nobody has put their mark on it! It has recently been cleared enough for a driveway (180 metres from the road). Other than that it currently has gum trees all over it. We are planning to retain a lot of the existing trees to keep the native animals there (birds, possums, bats and even our very own koala). We are going to have loads of natives for the birds and butterflies, succulents and drought-tolerant plants and fruit trees and vegies. Animal-wise we are going to have a few chickens (I like Silkies), two miniature goats, a cat, two turtles, one bearded dragon, and we already have the two little dogs.

We are so new to this lifestyle. If anybody can advise on where we may obtain any of the above animals, or if anybody would like to write to give advice on our new subtropical lifestyle, how to be as self-sufficient as possible, send some vegetable or plant seeds, or anything else, I look forward to hearing from you. I am looking for some new ladies to write to as penfriends. I am in my 30s, love gardening, animals, reading, yoga and lots more.

YK,
257 Sully-Dowdings Rd, PINE CREEK 4670.

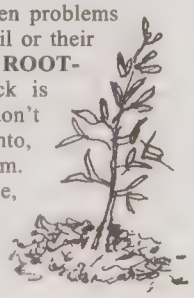
Dear GR,

Jo McRae wrote regarding **CHAIN LETTERS**. The writers do not need to access addresses from GR, any phone book will suffice. This particular scammer has been reported to the Queensland authorities and they are fully aware of this unlawful pursuit, having successfully prosecuted others. I suggest that any person receiving such missives send the copy to your relevant Department of Consumer Affairs. Respond to these as you would to Nigerian scams, regardless of where they originate.

Tom Edgar,
GLEN APLIN 4381.

Dear Megg,

Most readers would not be aware that when problems arise with fruit trees, it might not be their soil or their gardening skills that are at fault, but the **ROOTSTOCK** the tree is grafted onto. Rootstock is vitally important, but most plant retailers don't know what rootstock their trees are grafted onto, labels seldom say, and suppliers won't tell them.



Rootstock affects everything: tree size, shape, bearing age, disease resistance, tolerance of drought and waterlogging; fruit quality, taste, size, colour and harvest date. Apples grown on Northern Spry rootstock are unlikely to be affected by woolly aphis. Peach and nectarine trees on peach rootstock cannot tolerate wet feet, yet the same trees on certain plum rootstocks are much more tolerant of waterlogging. However, on the wrong plum rootstock incompatibilities occur.

Readers might like to experiment with their own grafting. Try planting some cherry plum seeds to grow seedlings on which to graft plums, apricots, peaches, nectarines or almonds. Use apple seedlings to graft apples, pear or quince seedlings for pears, and cherry seedlings for cherries.

I would like to offer some other **HINTS FOR SUCCESSFUL GROWING OF FRUIT TREES.** Do not purchase last year's potted up fruit trees; they are nearly always a waste of money and will always be outperformed by younger stock. Take care to plant your trees to the same depth they were at the nursery and allow them plenty of space to spread. Tree roots are often damaged in the transfer from nursery to your planting hole, so the top needs to be cut back to balance this. Prune new trees to three well-spaced limbs and cut these back to about a third of their former length, the strongest cut back the hardest so all three limbs are equal in length and form a vase shape.

George Read,
161 Nichol Rd, KOONDROOK 3580.

Perhaps readers can share names and contact details of good fruit tree suppliers who know their rootstocks.

Dear GRs,

I need a **PATTERN FOR MAKING A BEANBAG**. I have been searching in the local library to find one, but with no luck. A small one, suitable for children to sit on, would be great. Also, if anyone has any dressmaking patterns from the 1950s (size 10), or patterns for large-brimmed hats, handbags or children's painting smocks (button-up or tied), I would be grateful. If you wanted to send them through the mail, I would send you back the postage in unused stamps and a recipe if you would let me know what you wanted. If I haven't got what you're looking for, I'll keep an eye out and send it on if I find it.

Janelle Blechen,
2/11 Marrow Cres, MUNDINGBURRA 4812

Contributors and correspondents who want letters or articles returned are requested to include correct postage.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR Readers,

Most readers by now realise we have a **WATER CRISIS**, with various schemes for solving it such as recycled storm water, desalination plants and water tanks on new properties. Many dams in south-east Queensland, in spite of reasonable recent rains, are still under half full with warnings about further restrictions and price rises. My toilet, like the vast majority, has a dual flush and, apart from the occasional visitor, is never used by me because all urine is used on the garden. I've never seen the point of wasting a valuable fertiliser with a couple of litres of fresh water, which I have to pay for. For readers who doubt the **VALUE OF URINE** here is a quote from *The Gourmet Gardener*, the author of which is a lecturer at the Royal Horticultural Society UK:

'Human urine is rich in nitrogen with significant amounts of potassium and other nutrients and it's free. The first of the day is the most valuable. Dilute it down at least 50 to 1 and it's an excellent feed, especially for citrus. If you can't bring yourself to use it on the soil, put it on the compost heap. Never apply it neat and do not use yours if you take antibiotics or hormones and so on. Stale urine is considered superior by the 'old boys', but really whiffs too much.'

The Gourmet Gardener is a beautifully illustrated and very informative new book. The author's main theme is to go for quality rather than maximum yields: the best flavoured varieties, heritage fruits and vegetables. It is not a cheap book at 20 pounds or around $50. I borrowed mine from the local library, but as it is such a nice book I'm tempted to buy one. Even though it's a UK publication, much will be suitable for Australia. There is a section on pineapples, citrus, bananas, ginger, passionfruit as well as Asian vegetables. He also mentioned Downings' fruit catalogue of 1866, which listed 643 varieties of apples and there are still 100 distinct varieties available. The American TN Field catalogued 850 varieties of pear in 1866, many of French origin.

Alan Stewart,
12 Weymouth Pl, ALEXANDRA HILLS 4161.

The Gourmet Gardener *by Bob Flowerdew was reviewed in GR 171. It's available from Simon & Schuster for $49.95, ph: 02-9983-6600.*

To Grass Roots & Readers,

Thanks for the subscription my dad rang through for my birthday: GR for a birthday pressie, I couldn't get better than that. I love every page in GR after discovering your wonderfully enlightening magazine when a friend gave me a copy last April.

I am proud to say my first ever garden, with zero experience before, is flourishing. My fiancé is proud of my efforts and we love our hand-in-hand walk around the flower bed smelling the flowers and enjoying the look of our first steps to self-sufficiency.

I am in the gemfields with **WILDLIFE GALORE** and had big problems with possums at the start. I have learnt you need to accept you have a lot of wildlife and what they do to the garden is their instinctive behaviour, so preventative measures are the best form of war. We have tin sheeting around most of the trees and that has deterred the possums. I have fenced in my garden pretty well, enough so it doesn't look silly. I mean, if the wildlife really want to get in, so be it, they are mother nature's pruners. Bell (Irish Wolfhound x Dane and more) gardens with me and that's okay; she is just part of the family, until she gets to stomping the seedlings.

Since I'm in the bush (rural Queensland) I have many mail order catalogues, a couple I'll share: Herbal Extracts Organic for the first-aid kit, Ninethana Seed Service Pty Ltd, PO Box 2121, Albany, WA 6330; a book called *Australian Herb Industry Resource Guide for NZ (*excellent for all herbal needs, extracts, seeds, medical, tea, powders, heaps of stuff); couldn't not mention Diggers Club – a must.

To help out SS, GR 171, regarding a lavender oil extractor. The above book I mentioned has a special lavender section. Herbs with Altitude, 02-6458-5289, cash@snowy.net.au can also give you advice.

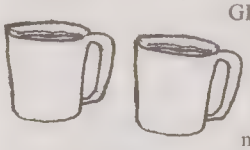
Does anyone know the best method to **GET RID OF MEAT ANT NESTS**? Tried petrol and caustic soda to no avail!

Keep up your very inspiring, funny, wonderful, enlightening publication, GR; I love your work and everyone out there reading this.

TLS,
C/- Post Office, RUBYVALE 4702.
Email: staristari_nights@yahoo.com.au

Dear Grass Roots Crew,

What a discovery! During a recent sickness a friend lent me some GR mags. My husband and I became so engrossed our freshly made cuppas were completely forgotten until long after they were stone cold! Delighted to find GR 171 at the newsagents; I have wasted no time in sending our subscription and look forward to starting our own collection. (Ostensibly, this sub is a birthday gift to my husband Murray!) **GR IS LIKE A WELL-PREPARED BANQUET** of ideas and info: titillating, satisfying, healthy and enjoyable – a real magazine.



Congratulations on all the obvious hard work and love that goes into its production.

Meg Sorenson,
27 Mount Vue Rd, HEALESVILLE 3777.

Thank you Meg for the enthusiastic praise – it made us all smile. We hope GR continues to provide you with much enjoyment and practical information.

Dear Grass Roots & Readers,

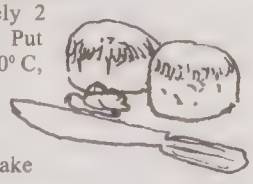
I am about to move to Murrumbateman in the next six months and aim to grow lots of herbs. Can anyone tell me if there are any **HERB INTEREST GROUPS** in the **CANBERRA/MURRUMBATEMAN/YASS** area?

Jackie Wilson,
PO Box 185, CURTIN 2605.
Email: jekwilson2005@yahoo.com.au

Dear Mary & GR Team,

Here's a recipe I think you'll like.

For **CHEESE AND ONION SCONES** you need 3 cups self-raising flour, ½ teaspoon baking powder, ½ teaspoon salt, 45 grams butter, 60 grams grated cheddar cheese, 60 grams grated Parmesan cheese, 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped, 1 medium onion, approximately 1¼ cups milk. Sift flour and salt into bowl. Rub in butter, stir in cheeses, parsley and grated onion. Pour in nearly all the milk at once. Mix to a soft dough (flours vary in the way they absorb liquid). Place on a floured surface, knead lightly. Pat dough out to approximately 2 centimetres thickness. Cut into rounds. Put on oven tray. Bake in hot oven, 200 – 250° C, for 15 minutes or until golden. Makes about 20 scones. Best eaten hot, but taste just as good cold. I usually use white flour as wholemeal tends to make them heavy. Can be frozen.



I lost this recipe for five years. You should have heard the grizzling from Ray all that time. Now I make a batch each week just for him and keep a batch in the freezer in case he wants more.

Robyne.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

I am a long-time reader, first-time writer. Your magazine is great: a valuable resource and enjoyable reading. We live on 78 acres between Eumundi and Kenilworth in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland and give thanks every day that we live in this beautiful place in the bush 45 minutes from the beach.

Our daughters – Sheila (six) and Jaime (four) – go to the Noosa Pengari Steiner School and we car pool to school 35 minutes away with two other families. Next year we will have nine kids going from this area and we have been trying all avenues to get a bus. It is not viable for the school bus and we don't fit the criteria for a grant. If anyone has any ideas or has been in this situation, we welcome your input.

The lady who gave the lower back pain exercise last issue – thank you, it helps.

We have two pigs, Rosie (18 months) and Rory (eight months), that are thriving, apart from some dry skin around their ears. We don't know a lot about pigs, but they live in a pen (both together and separate, to give Rosie a break) and are let out a few times a week to roll in the dam and root and forage. We think Rosie is pregnant and believe the gestation is four months and that females cycle every three weeks. We feed them boiled barley and house scraps (not meat). We would welcome any information on **RAISING PIGS NATURALLY** and what more they may need nutritionally.

Does anyone know the long-term effect of drinking rainwater and do we need to take minerals?

Di Caskey,
297 Boyle Rd, BELLI PARK 4562.

There are some back issues of GR that will help you with info about pigs. Have a look at GRs 52, 57, 104, 107, 112, 121, 143, 144, 145 and 146. See page 82 for how to order back copies.

Dear Megg & All At GR,

I noted your interest in a letter published in GR 169 from a reader in Queensland regarding sourcing seed of a **HANGING CARNATION.** I have managed to obtain some seed from an old-timer in country South Australia who still grows them. They are known as Tyrolean carnations as they originate from central Europe and are popular in window boxes and baskets for their habit of trailing and growing outwards and downwards. They seem to be mostly in red and pink shades and apparently grow easily from seed, barely covered, from spring to autumn.

I have enclosed some with this letter as you expressed an interest in them, but as my supplies are somewhat limited I would be happy to grow some on and send to anyone who may have been in contact with you in relation to acquiring them. I did write to the reader mentioned some weeks ago, but have not had a reply.

I hope you have some luck with them, I will be sowing some this week, so, fingers crossed, we will have some to share.

Best wishes and thanks for a great publication.

Philip Wilson,
Lavender Farm Rd, WOODEND 3442.
Email: wilkenna@nex.net.au

Philip is referring to a letter in GR 169 from David Kaden of Scarness, Queensland. David was wanting seeds of a hanging carnation, which Philip has been able to obtain. The seeds GR planted have germinated and are growing well in a pot.

Dear GR,

A group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have set up a **CORPORATION**, which we call Turilana. We intend buying a large mixed farm up along the NSW-Queensland border areas inland a bit. We have a farm lined up, now we will go for it! We intend a lot of us living there to work it between us. It won't be a commune. It has many cottages, shearing sheds and animals, which go with the property.

We want to run the farm organically, holistically, permaculturally, be sustainable and become self-sufficient in all ways. All nationalities and religions of young people will be welcome. We would like to **TRAIN YOUNG PEOPLE** and others in an organic mixed farming permaculture course. They would learn the practical side of self-sufficiency.

There will be no alcohol, drugs, weapons or abuse of any kind! We all will be paying rent on our cottages and this will pay off the farm. Families are welcome and there will be a one adult/one vote system, with regular meetings and discussion groups. There are many other ideas, too many to mention here. If writing, please send copies of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander certificates. If anyone is interested to know any more about our plans, please contact us.

Miss RJ Parkins,
'Turilana', Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Corporation,
Dead Bird Mission, ASHFORD 2361.

Dear GRs,

The segment about Microbial Products on 'Landline' (ABC TV 2/10/05) and their **NEW NONTOXIC WOOL LICE TREATMENT** was good news on all fronts: it is nonpoisonous, leaves no residue and is safe for the sheep, shearers and wool classers. It appears to be effective against blowfly maggots and can probably get into production in time to meet the 2007 EU deadline when a ban will apply to any wool with toxic residues, which were poisoning their rivers. Congratulations to Professor Pinnock and Dr David Cooper. The program mentioned that their small set-up in Adelaide could not handle the expected demand for the product and it might have to be produced offshore. Surely there is some way it could be produced in large quantities in Australia.

We've all heard of a sea change (and the Illawarra is a great place for a sea change), but a tree change? The segment on the above 'Landline' show about Pine Creek in the Northern Territory, population 350, was a good example of what a bit of initiative and self-publicity can do. Empty government housing was to be auctioned off for removal, but locals prevailed upon the owners to sell the houses and land and 40 new people/families have moved in, including a French artist, a spinner and her weaver husband. There must be places in every state which have **CHEAP HOUSING** where the Australian dream of owning one's own home is still achievable for anyone prepared to make the tree change.

P Ferguson,
BERKELEY 2506.

Anyone who listens to ABC radio or watches ABC TV might like to look at a new website: www.noabcnoway.org It appears there are more staff cuts impending to news and current affairs departments in the name of cost cutting.

Please keep letters brief, clearly written and relevant to self-sufficiency topics. Letters pushing barrows (religious, political or other) will not be published.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR,

The **PRICE OF OIL** is unavoidably rising due to the usual supply-demand paradox. With China and India about to become the world's largest consumers of oil and the Middle East supplies now destabilised, we should be able to think ahead to at least double the petrol prices we have now, but don't panic because LPG and LNG are right here in huge quantities in Australia. City buses have been using liquid natural gas for years and I've been using liquid petroleum gas for years, as do most taxis. Gas is far less damaging to the environment than diesel and petrol, so what is going on that we aren't encouraged to use gas instead? LPG has been used for years in enclosed spaces such as warehouses, in fork-lift trucks, and if it was damaging to health you can imagine what the unions would say about that.

The alternatives are already available, so why not use them, and they are cheaper into the bargain. Maintenance on the vehicles' engines is reduced and improved technology by direct gas injection is available now too, which gives better gas economy than previously.

COMPRESSED-AIR 'fuelled' cars have been around in very small numbers since the 1920s, when an inventor converted a Model T Ford. Much smaller cars are available in France to allow people to do their shopping with no need for petrol or heavy electric cars. Americans use golf buggies driven by air so as to avoid having to walk around the golf course. Invalid trikes are also available. The idea is that at home you blow up the air cylinder with an air compressor, driven by an electric motor, until the tank is full. Then the high pressure air drives an air motor to propel the vehicle. This is cheap transport. Of course, nothing is for nothing and sooner or later the air will run out, but filling up with air at a service station's tyre air pump will get you going again. How far you can go depends on the size of the air tank and how heavy the vehicle is. Some French cars have a small petrol motor driving an air compressor and this is called a hybrid car. An Australian version would be called a 'mongrel' I suppose. One day I guess someone will invent one that uses solar energy to pump up the air cylinder, and why not? After the sun went down you'd still have a reserve in the air tank to get home on. I've often wondered how you could utilise the enormous heat off a black road on a hot day. Well, all you Einsteins, what are you waiting for? One day oil will run out and we had better get prepared.

Roberino,
PO Box 359, WOOLGOOLGA 2456.

Dear Megg,

My latest GR magazine (171) to hand. How I love it, thank you all so much. You have an item about pink heath (*Epacris impressa*) in Eco News. It surely grieved me to hear that the **WONDERFUL HEATH BUSHES** of glorious flowers are diminishing in Victoria. I was raised in the Dandenong Ranges of Victoria from 1936. On the lower slopes of the ranges near Bayswater, Boronia and Ferntree Gully the heath grew in abundance, just high enough for little legs to jump over. Nana said the plants would cry in pain if you squashed them. Another native plant of delicate spindly growth was bright yellow with dark brown edging. It was called bacon and eggs by the locals. Also, a plant of white bunchy flowers was called 'blackfellow's bread'. We ate them if hungry enough. Have they disappeared also? Back in those days the countryside was engulfed with flowers planted by the early settlers. Can you imagine the sight: daffodils, snowdrops, jonquils, apple trees and plums of all kinds adorned the hills in the winter. Stone chimneys stood as memorials to the men and women of the 1850s who worked the land, raised their children and lived and loved. We even had heath growing prolifically around our home in Ringwood.

I hope the young people up in the high country plant the lovely heath, using this wonderful fungal material that the Melbourne University researcher has developed to aid its growth. They need financial help to advance their propagation program. Come on Victoria, get behind this project and help your own flower emblem.

Maureen Naylor Horan,
ASHGROVE 4060.

Dear GR,

Always enjoy the magazine. When health becomes an issue I search back to find ideas and write to the people concerned, but no doubt people move on. I refer to GR 156 on a **BREAST CANCER VIDEO** from the USA: 'Cancer Does Not Scare Me Any More' by Dr Lorraine Day. Does anyone know where I can get it, or have ideas on this topic? Have to know.

Marcia,
C/- 6 Whitby Way, SEAFORD 3198.

Dear GRs,

John Danecki in GR 171 was asking about **GARDENING NEAR PARKS**. There's an old farmer's advice: When investing in a farm always ensure there are two farms between yours and the forest. I do believe I read it in a *Grass Roots* article some years ago. Forest animals will be tempted to forage for food in nearby farms at night. The further they wander from their own territory, the more anxious they become. Their territorial instinct makes them more fearful. Farms close to parks, gardens or forest areas may require extra work or expense for wire netting or other fencing to protect their gardens, vegies and fruit trees from forest dwellers. I have a suburban block, which gives birds and bats a larger territory to forage. The bats think my lilly-pilly tree is a supermarket without checkouts and the birds claim ownership of the mulberry tree. Now I must buy a net. My neighbour's yard is full of fluttering plastic bags tied to sticks. Methinks fluttery bags only work on some species of birds. Must ask her how effective it is. Good luck.

Mary, thank you for your interesting and informative note. Like ripples in a pond, positivity flows outwards, a little like the interaction of energy in the universe. Thank you for sharing it with me. I am pleased my porridge recipes are so well received in Alice Springs. Wow!

Had to see my doc yesterday about a tickle in my throat – very annoying. It's allergic: 'probably jasmine or ginger'. No big deal. I showed him your letter. I said, 'you probably know about the milk stimulation of oats'. He said that he didn't, but he believes oats could lower cholesterol levels, so the knowledge spreads and grows. Last year I gave the doc a small mulberry tree. Last week they got their first mulberry. I wonder if he and his wife shared it.

Kel Connell,
KARUAH 2324.

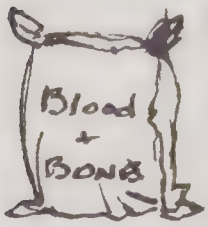
Kel's article in GR 169 about using leftover porridge has ended up being used in an Alice Springs hospital by a lactation consultant because oats stimulate milk production.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear GR Folk,

CADMIUM LEACHES out of car tyres and poisons the ground.

I have not had much luck with rose cuttings. I bought three roses and they were doing poorly. I sprinkled a handful of blood and bone and put a shovelful of wood ash onto the roses and rose cuttings. They are now doing well and growing beautifully.



My speech has been bad for nearly 18 months. I bought a **MAGNETIC UNDERLAY** two years ago. Mum recently advised me to take the magnetic underlay off; she had read an article somewhere about them. It's four nights since I took off the magnetic underlay and my speech is getting better every day.

June Connelly,
60 Braeside Dr, LAUNCHING PLACE 3139.

Dear Grass Roots,

Thank you all for a wonderful magazine – we are a family of six living in **DENMARK, SCANDINAVIA**, who have been to Australia several times. I was born there in 1963. Living a self-sufficient lifestyle on our small farm with a few dairy goats, chooks, ducks, rabbits, two dogs and a cat is really the life we want. But it's a pity people are so busy all around us. We don't know of anyone living like us here in Denmark. Nearly all families need two incomes and the few who have a small farm only have time for it on the weekends. I would love to know more back-to-nature people who aren't always in a rush.

Thank you Jane 'Many Leaves' Lawrance for your lovely article in GR 171, 'A Baby Joins The Farm'. So nice to see people writing about everyday life. It is such a treasure having a baby, especially when you take your time to really be together with him/her. I enjoyed your story very much; it took me back in time to when our kids were little – now they're 9 – 17. Good luck with your family life; I wish you a full and rich life together!

In the early days when we started out here in 1990 we were really active getting our house renovated, installing a compost toilet and a wood stove with central heating, establishing gardens, building a big shed and fencing and planting lots of trees. Now (enjoying it's all done) I feel other parts of life have become more important, for instance spirituality and self-development. Regarding we humans as spiritual beings who have come to earth to go through a learning process makes life so much more exciting and gives everything one does so much more depth and purpose.

A healthy diet for all the family is also a great interest of mine. I've had digestive problems for a long time and have found some great advice in GR as well as other places. Lately our family has been following the so-called 'Hay system', which is not a diet but a particular way of eating where one doesn't mix protein and starch. We also have started only eating fruit and drinking water for breakfast and till noon. Both things are supposed to give the body the very best conditions for cleansing itself of toxins and keeping fit and strong. It is said to have helped millions of people and totally cured them of arthritis, obesity, allergies, digestive problems and even heart problems and dental decay. If anyone wants to give it a go, the book I use is called *Food Combining for Health* by Doris Grant and Jean Joice.

It really is hard to work out what is best for us to eat, but generally one rule is always recommended – that is to eat as naturally as possible and not too much. I look forward to seeing some good results of our present eating habits.

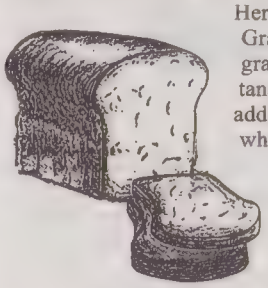
Well, all you people out there, I am glad you're there. It's a great comfort to me to know that we are quite a few folks on this wonderful planet who believe that a natural low-impact lifestyle is the best. Praises to mother earth and all the love we feel for her.

Katrine Rudolph,
DENMARK.

Hello To All,

If you bake using a **BREAD MACHINE**, you've probably experienced failures, especially using mixes with rye, oats and cornmeal. I use a Panasonic SD200, a great machine, but it lacks one vital control: I cannot isolate the dough's rising to one cycle. I have written to the manufacturer, but after waiting a few years the machine still has no optional gas-release cycle. Being a sparky, I added a switch to control the mixing motor, but that's only manual, not automatic. I used to put dry yeast at the bottom of the machine, as directed by the maker. This is where I think the maker has erred. The other day, in desperation, I tried a trick I use when I knead sourdough bread.

I put 500 millilitres of warm water in a container, stirring in one teaspoon of dry yeast and one of sugar. After setting it aside, I put half the dry mix into the mixing bowl, then I poured in the now frothy, yeasty brew, finally adding the rest of the dry mix. I selected the basic bake setting for four hours. Imagine my surprise when I found the dough above the top of the bowl – not often accomplished using heavy mixes and dry yeast. After several loaves, I am pleased I can now make bread that rises high on one or two cycles, depending on what the mix is.



Here's the mix I prefer: 500 grams Natural Grains mix, 150 grams rye flour, 150 grams rolled oats, plus a handful of sultanas for sweetening. You do not need to add salt to make fine bread. The local baker who gave me some sourdough starter told me salt actually kills yeast. I suspect mix makers add salt more as a preservative than a bread-making ingredient. After my bread has cooled, I put it in a plastic bag on the top shelf of my fridge, where it stays fresh for days, but usually the loaf is gone in two. Older slices make wonderful toast for tahini, jam, Vegemite, cheese. Enjoy.

Robert Millet,
150 Madden St, DEVONPORT 7310.

Hello Fellow GR Readers,

Our little family has decided that we need to **ESCAPE OUR CURRENT LIFESTYLE** and head towards a vegetarian, self-sufficiency community. We are currently based in Gippsland and would like to move somewhere in Victoria, NSW or Tassie. Our family of five (plus dog, cat and chooks) would like to be able to live in a community with fellow vegies, environment-friendly, community-minded people, not too far from shops, near bushland or rainforest, close to small primary and secondary schools, and perhaps a community garden or two. So if anyone out there knows of a community like this or like-minded families, can they please contact me? Thank you all from our family.

Amanda,
PO Box 305, HEYFIELD 3858.
Email: jemacky@tpg.com.au

Anonymous letters will not be published. Please indicate if you would like personal details to be withheld.

Dear Grass Roots,

In reply to John Danecki's letter: I believe spinach, silverbeet and warrigal greens all contain a certain amount of **OXALIC ACID**, though not enough to harm you in the quantities you would normally eat. Rhubarb and oxalis contain the same acid, but in harmful qualities.

MULLED WINE is easy to make, and ingredients can be changed according to your taste. Tasting the brew is the cook's privilege, of course! This recipe is adapted from an ancient French one.

You need 2 litres red wine, 175 grams white sugar, 1 or 2 cinnamon sticks, 5-centimetre piece of green ginger (root ginger), bruised, 1 teaspoon cloves, 1 teaspoon nutmeg pieces, sprig of marjoram, 1 teaspoon cardamom seed, 1 teaspoon black peppercorns. Warm the wine in an enamel or stainless steel pot for preference. Stir in the sugar to dissolve. Add all the spices and herbs and simmer gently at least 10 minutes. Taste for sweetness. Serve as soon as possible, steaming hot, in cups or mugs.

Can be decorated with slices of lemon or orange floating on top. Can be strained and bottled when cold, for future reheating, but not much alcohol will be left by then. If using ground spices, only half measures are needed and shorten the simmering time. If too spicy, it can be diluted with more wine, sugar or apple juice. It is a very warming and cheering drink.

Rose Ovenden,
BENTLEIGH 3204.
Email: rose_ovenden@hotmail.com

Dear Grass Roots,

Have been meaning to write for some time, but life has got the better of me on many occasions and there never seem to be enough hours in the day. I would like to thank Marjorie Bligh for her fruit cake recipe (GR 165). Sadly, my grandmother passed on before I could get her recipe.

My modified recipe is as follows. Use 1 kilogram mixed fruit soaked in 600 millilitres Pauls or Farmers Union coffee milk, 2 tablespoons Nescafé coffee and half a miniature bottle of Drambuie. Mix all ingredients, put in sealed container in fridge, stir once per day for three days. On fourth morning add 2 cups self-raising flour. Bake in moderate oven for an hour. Check centre with a skewer after about three-quarters of an hour with a fan-forced oven (tends to cook faster). I used Orchid icing for my Christmas cake last year, painting the cake with sugar syrup before icing. This recipe worked so well there was none left at the end of Christmas Day. It goes well with brandy custard.

We had an abundance of all types of tomatoes this year; a friend couldn't give enough away, so I found a recipe for **ITALIAN DRIED TOMATOES.** Quarter a large quantity tomatoes. Sprinkle with chopped herbs, garlic, rosemary, oregano, marjoram and basil. Bake on trays to dry, 7½ – 8 hours in 80° C oven. You might have to move trays as top ones dry faster. You might also have to turn tomatoes. Store in preserving jars with olive or peanut oil with two teaspoons of paprika added to stop mould and act as a preserving agent.

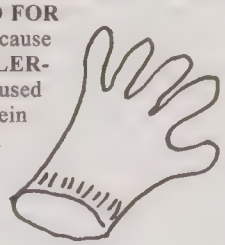
For Bindi and Chris (GR 169) with the **BLACK MILLIPEDE PROBLEM**. In a bucket mix three containers naphthalene and one container borax. I usually run it around the walls of the house and around verandah edges. If the house is raised, use a washing powder scoop and flick the mixture under the house. Do this three-monthly when wet, six-monthly when dry. It's good for stone sheds and under anything being stored and has the added advantage of deterring cockroaches, moths, silverfish, fleas and ticks. Mice and rats don't like it either. It works well in tropical regions and doesn't bother the dogs as it dissolves after a few days.

For **TINEA, THRUSH** or any fungal-type infection have a mixture of one cup white vinegar to two cups water. Rinse affected part after showering and air-dry thoroughly. Shoes and boots can be rinsed with straight vinegar and sun-dried. For ladies soak in a medium depth bath with two cups vinegar and one cup salt. In the laundry add one to two cups of vinegar to the washing water and half the amount of laundry powder. Adding a dash of disinfectant to everyday washing also helps, especially in the wet season.

Niki Fullerton,
32 Mardango Cres, BATCHELOR 0845.

Dear GR & Steve Fitzgerald,

Thank you for your magazine. I used to be an avid reader and subscriber years ago when living the city life and dreaming of my property in the country, the chooks, cows and vegie patch. This dream has become a reality and I still like to buy GR now and again to catch up on what is happening and bring back fond memories. I am writing with a bit of a concern re the article by Steve Fitzgerald, GR 171 page 14, 'Steve's Condiments'. The recipes sound great and I will definitely try the rose vinegar as I have a Mr Lincoln Rose. My concern is with the recommendation of the use of **LATEX GLOVES WITH FOOD AND FOR A HOME KITCHEN**. These gloves can cause **SEVERE LIFE THREATENING ALLERGIES** in people and really should only be used for infectious material and be of low protein and a powder-free variety even for this. In the last decade or so natural rubber latex allergy has become an emerging world-wide problem. People affected by this allergy cannot eat foods handled with latex gloves, be given treatment with latex gloves, breathe in the particles which air off from these gloves, go near latex balloons or be in a building with balloons or gloves. Some countries have already banned these gloves for food handling, hopefully Australia will also in the future. Do a Google search for further information.



If you prefer to use gloves for handling chillies and other foods, there are cheaper alternatives, like plastic and vinyl. If supermarkets don't have these on the shelves, just ask them to get them in instead of the latex ones. You never know your luck. Also when people have this type 1 latex allergy (can cause anaphylaxis like peanuts, bee stings etc) they sometimes develop a latex-fruit syndrome because some foods have similar proteins to the latex protein. Some include, but are not limited to, banana, kiwi, avocado, chestnut, almonds, stone fruits and foods that may be genetically modified with the rubber protein for antifungal properties. They were experimenting with a variety of tomato and the rubber protein. Don't know if they ended up getting this one on the market.

Leonie Valuntas-Achilles,
NYMBOIDA 2460.
Email: leonie@nymboida.cjb.net

Dear Grass Roots People,

I am wanting to buy the old **JOHN AND BETTY BOOKS** and other old school readers. Can any readers help?

Kathy Waples,
C/- Post Office, ECHUCA 3564.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

I was introduced to the magazine by my mother when I was young and even found a few penpals through your readers (long since gone). Over the last 10 years I have bought the occasional issue and subscribed on and off. As is the case with many other readers, I kept the dream of owning my own property alive through applying ideas from the mag in whatever place I happened to be. Six months ago my husband and I, after renting a property, bought our own. We are now the proud owners (with the bank) of 11½ acres **SOUTH OF DROUIN** in Victoria. We are still blown away by what we have achieved, not only in buying the property but what we have achieved since then.

We were very fortunate in that the place we purchased is sound in structure and was only the bones of what we wanted. There was nothing but one paddock, a house, no gardens and only one good large shed. So we've been creating ever since. I count my blessings that my husband is a very gifted man, so new sheds and the like have been built by him in ground-breaking time. He is also exceedingly supportive of my dream for self-sufficiency. He helps out with my extended animal family as well as our own two-legged ones.

We have three children, six, four and 14 months old and these, as you can imagine, take up a lot of my time. Sometimes I feel as if my whole life is spent doing dishes, preparing food and washing nappies/clothes. I find myself berating myself for not getting enough outside work done and have to give myself a good talking to.

There are often articles in *Grass Roots* about alternative education. I've had my first-born in Steiner and Montessori schools and contemplated home schooling, but decided against it due to my lack of organisation and self-discipline. My six-year-old is now enrolled at a small community school and is absolutely thriving. They are flexible and individually targeted in their teaching.

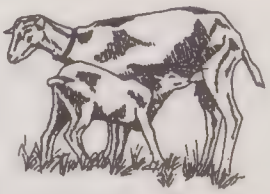
We are on a creek line, so we've fenced it off and will revegetate that and a lot of other bits of our land over time. Of course, we are a pesticide-free zone. We have begun to remineralise and rebalance our depleted soils after soil tests, so the weeds, of which there are many, will find conditions here unsuitable.

Our vegie garden and orchard are in place and producing. That and the goat shed were the first structures built.

I have three horses, two of which are lame on and off. I had a gifted instructor in the past who taught me to communicate with the spirit of the horse as well as ride. My horses have taught me a lot about myself and I believe made me a better parent. Of course, we have chickens that free range in the orchard and a few escape artists outside of that. I was hoping to breed some for my husband to eat. I did read an article in GR about what to cross to get a decent size bird. However, it involved more roosters and I'm happy with the gentlemanly behaviour of the ones I've got. So if anyone in the area has eggs, I'd be happy to purchase them.

I've four dogs, one of which is a Kelpie that was dumped as a pup. She's a working dog through and through and circles anything breathing. Although I'm training her to the best of my ability, I have trouble directing her energy off the lead. Any help here would be appreciated.

We have **TOGGENBURG GOATS** for milking. I love this chore. I'd be interested to hear from anyone who has had goats or milking experience: why are my hands still aching when milking? After two years you'd think they'd be used to it. I've come to the conclusion that it's the pasteurisation that gives goats' milk that terrible taste, so I ensure my goats are in peak condition and health and keep our milk raw. We have an abundance of milk, so if anyone wants to share an udder (ha ha) please let me know. I've tried to make cheese, but I think I need to do a course; alas, I have been unable to source one in my area. Just to add to the mix, I bought an eight-month-old Dexter heifer to tame for future butter, cream and cheese making adventures. I also needed her cow dung.



I am still really excited about being here and am constantly awed by the spectacular views our place gives us. I am very lucky. It's great waking up knowing that this is where I will live out my years. My roots can take firm hold of the earth beneath me and I can take care of our little space, returning abundance back to the earth. I could write forever about plans and dreams and ideas gleaned from GR, but the day's fine, the house is a mess, the baby's sleeping and the garden calls.

Elizabeth Rohde,
PO Box 534, DROUIN 3818.

Dear Grass Roots & Readers,

I'm interested in swapping seed of nonhybrid edible plants and have at present **SEEDS OF LAB LAB AND SNAKE CLIMBING BEANS**, also kale and collards. The other plants, still growing, are Greek and Blue Lake climbing beans, Jolly Roger sweet corn, hardy Tom and Tropic tomatoes (not to be confused with Tropicals as these are hybrids), Jap pumpkins, parsley, basil, mint, chillies and salad burnet. The latter I don't particularly like, but if there's anyone who can help with any suggestion for its use I would appreciate it very much. There are many other plants I want to try growing now I'm just past retirement age and hope to find more time to extend the garden. I use an old wire mattress for sifting the soil from the stones. I sometimes think there's more stones! Anyway, that's another story.

I find letting brassicas go to flower seems to attract many bees and predatory insects such as lacewings, wasps, mantis, spiders and other small ones you don't see. There are toads that burrow into the damp soil; I think it's them that leave droppings of beetle shell near their burrows. We also have lizards and the occasional long legless ones, which I'm sure must be snakes – the last one was in a compost heap. I never use poisons, otherwise most of the different critters wouldn't be around.

If anyone wishes to swap seed, they are very welcome. I'll answer all letters. If you don't have seed to swap, I'll send some anyway. I'm also interested in ideas on gardening. I've been reading GR for about 20 years now and never tire of what people say in this magazine. The breadth of subjects is amazing – too much to remember, but they make a great reference encyclopedia if you can avoid losing them. If you would like some seed, please send an appropriately sized envelope and a stamp to allow for the weight of the seed. I can send 20 of each climbing bean, more of the smaller seed.

Norman Ross,
172 Caswell St, PEAK HILL 2869.

To avoid unwelcome approaches writers may indicate any personal details they wish to be withheld. Don't forget to put preferred contact details at the *bottom* of your letter. Letters are accepted and edited at the discretion of the publishers.

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots,

I am trying to locate a device called **SAFERAIN,** which used to be advertised in your magazine. The device is attached to the downpipe and allows the first rain to wash the roof and then shuts off to allow the rest of the water to go into the tank.

Geoff Dalgleish,
545 Shoemaker Rd, RD2 Waipu 0254, NEW ZEALAND.

Do any readers know if Saferain is still operating? There are several designs for DIY water diverters. See both GRs 152 and 153 for instructions on making your own device.

Dear Grass Roots Readers,

I hope someone may be able to help; my search at the library has been fruitless. I would like to make some **ORIGAMI** suitable for Christmas display (angel, small tree, star etc). Easy-to-follow instructions, or even a folded item, would be much appreciated.

Thanks in advance.

Mr E Baker,
PO Box 645, DEVONPORT 7310.

Dear Friends,

Thank you again for all the fascinating items in GR. Our supermarkets are obviously very popular for their range of products for sale, yet it is noticeable that items we like can suddenly disappear from the shelves. In addition, there always seem to be products that are now no longer generally available – chances are the stores claim insufficient demand to warrant stocking.

On a totally different subject: the range of **PRICES FOR SOME EXPORTS** intrigues me – for example, skim milk powder and butter. It makes me wonder, considering supermarket prices say for skim milk powder, whether there are differing qualities and should we know of such? To extend this thought – the meats we may buy are very varied in price: example rump steak – 'save $8 a kilogram' – with the price still nudging $10 plus, isn't it time to have a declared grading, or are we to be forever in the buyer beware status?

Being a member of **SEED SAVERS,** could we have a further article on their activities, aims and the help given to overseas groups?

Also, being a member of U3A (University of the Third Age), where mature-age folk display a world of similar and differing views and interests, makes me wonder just how widespread these groups are and whether some of their interests would come under the purview of GR?

Thank you for the new quantity name – a 'giggle' of worms – hadn't heard of that one before.

Read recently of a new avocado (from South Africa), pip free! Fascinating; makes me live in hope for a similar with mangos! Thank you too for the homemade cat biscuits recipe, but for city slickers it is rare to see chicken fat or seaweed for sale generally. Substitutes?

The Southern Cross-style of windmill used in the rural water supplies article makes me wonder, as the power generators seem to have decided to use the three-blade style of windmill, would a further article be possible comparing the differing styles of mills, uses and efficiency? Always being curious, I do wonder with the **WIND FARMS,** could another set of blades at the other end of the generator unit bring greater benefit/efficiency?

As a cover-to-cover read GR is always eagerly welcomed – thanks again.

Re Diane Jeffrey's questions about her **APRICOT TREE.** Our local ABC radio gardening program has a TAFE tutor as adviser on gardening questions. The general advice to get results from fruit trees can be two methods. Use Don Bradman's favourite weapon, a bat or a piece of wood, to bruise the tree bark. Girdle the tree using a sharp knife to cut through the bark in a spiral fashion. This interrupts the sap flow and causes the tree to urgently try to replicate itself by fruiting! Take care, don't cut completely round the trunk to ring-bark.

Roy Banks,
81 Parkes St, OAK FLATS 2529.

Dear Grass Root Readers,

Can anyone tell me where to buy a plant or seed of *Piper nigrum,* the common peppercorns that ground pepper is made from? The ones we buy in the shops have been oven-dried so are useless to plant. Also, where do I get a bulb of saffron (*Crocus sativus*)?

Dulcie Clarke,
34 Racecourse Rd, YEPPOON 4703.

Dear Grass Roots,

We feel the need to write in response to the article, 'Camping With Confidence', GR 171. It was the photograph which stunned us. On first glance we honestly thought it was a send up – a 'how not to camp' photograph. Then we realised it was serious. A variety of things bothered us, but the glaring feature of the scene was the amount of **RUBBISH STREWN THROUGHOUT THE CAMPSITE.** To use Bill Bryson's expression, it was a 'litter festival'.

The author of the article says, 'leave the site as clean as you found it'. We say, leave the site cleaner than when you found it. We have camped throughout Australia, and at most sites we usually spend at least half an hour cleaning up OPR (other people's rubbish) before we can feel happy about setting up camp.

Campers should have bags or other containers for their day-to-day rubbish, and take it with them when they leave. Dropping rubbish on the ground and cleaning up later doesn't work. Rubbish blows away from the immediate campsite. Small litter, such as breadclips, ties, teabags, bottle tops, and the humble cigarette butt, are overlooked in the clean-up. And importantly, children such as those in the photograph, learn that dropping rubbish on the ground is normal and acceptable.

To have to constantly clean up OPR when camping is bad enough, but to see it in a photograph as an example of how to camp, is just too much.

Lenore Heath & Ian Boswell,
WAMBOIN 2620.

Dear Fellow Grass Rooters,

Hi to all. I have two asks for help.

I am a shift worker and my partner works away from home. I have three school-age children to be looked after and supervised. I am willing to give free rent of my shed to someone in return. It would be better if they have or are willing to hire a caravan. There are other conditions I need to talk about as well and I will do this with the person. They must have a car and a licence and must not mind having a police check done on them. No drugs. I am hoping to help someone out as well as get help in return. My house is a solar house.

When I was a child you could get from flea markets and older cooks a jam or jelly type of produce called **PINEAPPLE HONEY.** I have been looking for years for a recipe for this and I would love to try and make it and cocos palm honey too.

Leonie & Crew,
'Noswad Yelkcub Domain', BOLLIEE via IMBIL 4570.
Ph: 0438-445-084.
Email: LeonieJDB@hotmail.com, LeonieJDB@bigpond.com

FEEDBACK LINK-UP FEEDBACK

Dear Grass Roots Staff,

I read with horror your suggestion regarding using tobacco left over from parties/visitors on the garden. As a (reluctant) smoker, I would never reuse cigarette butts in such high concentrations as you have suggested. Many 'recipes' suggest 5 – 10 cigarette ends to about 20 litres of water. More importantly, cigarettes contain fibreglass in filters and a horrendous range of chemicals in the tobacco itself, so they're hardly organic (or safe). Throw them in the bin, not on your garden!

Louisa Vale,
MOUNT BUFFALO 3740.

Dear GR Readers,

It looks as if I might have the opportunity to give once again my Backyard Productive courses at the adult education centre. Since most of the boundary fences in Melbourne are of treated pine I am a bit hesitant to follow this opportunity due to the fact that treated pine is toxic and contaminants could be absorbed by fruit trees and vegetables via leached chemicals in the soil.

Do any readers have any authoritative information that can shed light on whether vegetables can or cannot absorb toxic chemicals from treated pine that might leach into the soil?

Fred Bailey,
29 Taylor Ave, RESERVOIR 3073.

Dear Grass Roots,

After reading Alan Stewart's letter in Grass Roots 172, for the 'younger generation', I can recommend reading '**WEEVILS IN THE FLOUR**' by Wendy Lowenstein. You should be able to get it at any good second-hand book shop or your local library. It's a fascinating read about the Depression in Australia. Also, I am after a book called *Humping Old Bluey* by Ron Edwards. Will pay a fair price. Please write first.

M Gillies,
36/1374 Gold Coast Hwy, PALM BEACH 4221.

Dear Megg & All At GR,

Re Jan Edwards's letter in Feedback GR 172: In Western Australia chain letters are illegal and anyone receiving a chain letter is requested to report it to Consumer Protection with the names of participants. The letter is followed up with a view to prosecution. I too received a letter from the same person as Jo McRae. He did not get my address from GR or any other magazine.

Ronda,
SAFETY BAY 6169.

Dear Grass Roots,

Ian Brothers's long letter in GR 172 re his experiments with **NEWSPAPER WALLS** triggered off memories of my childhood in Indonesia, and our stay in an old house in Cheswick (Victoria) in the 1950s.

Newspapers in former years were very valuable, even after they'd been read and passed on from family to family and friends. Our mail and newspapers only came up once a month in the government steamer (ship), which also delivered VIPs on inspection tours, supplies for the small local shops and occasional private passengers. This was always a very special day, an exciting event!

Old papers were used to wrap up our purchases, be they groceries, fruit or vegies, soap or whatever. Smaller items such as peanuts or lollies were wrapped in pages of magazines or old exercise books, twisted into a paper cone with the open end folded over its contents. Absorbent papers were cut into squares for the dunny and the bigger pages were used as carpet square underlay (no one had wall-to-wall then). Without vacuum cleaners, these squares were brushed with wet tea leaves each day and once in a while hung outside to have the living daylights (and dust) beaten out of them with a specially designed carpet beater made of rattan (sometimes used on bums of naughty kids). But the most valuable use for old newspapers was on our walls!

Many houses were built with woven bamboo walls. How the village weavers managed to split those big bamboo hollow 'stems' into thin strips and then weave them into huge flat mats, often measuring 3 x 6 metres, without wrecking their bare fingers with bamboo splinters, I have yet to find out. But the result was a lightweight wall surface, which was then tacked on the building framework: one on the outside and one on the inside. The outside wall could then, after it had dried out, be painted or tarred to preserve it. While the tar was still tacky, we kids were encouraged to fling builders' sand over it, giving the house a rustic look that blended into the landscape.

The inside wall (ah, Ian, now we come to the crux of the matter!) was papered with several layers of newspapers, pasted on with homemade paste made of boiled starch with a bit of alum (for fire and vermin proofing). Each layer had to be dry before the next one was pasted on. Finally, to make the place look civilised, it was finished off with a layer of wallpaper.

During the 1950s we stayed in an old house in Creswick, where the inside walls consisted of hessian tightly stretched over timber framework and pasted over with layers of newspapers and wallpaper finish.

I've often wondered whether hessian could perhaps be pasted with a mix of papier mâché and cement (with a bit of alum) to make a more fireproof wall. Perhaps someone could let us know?

Madelon Harland,
75 McIntosh Rd, STRZELECKI.

Dear GR,

Diane Jeffrey (GR 172) asks about an **APRICOT TREE** that has not fruited after eight years. I'd give it a bit longer. We had a mandarin that was about to get the chop after seven fruitless years and then it produced beautiful fruit and has done so each year since. Seven years ago we planted a loquat and had decided that it was to serve as an ornamental, and this year we had a good crop of sweet fruit.

In this age of speed **MAYBE WE ARE ALL A BIT IMPATIENT.** I read recently that the government intends to test all Australian five-year-olds to identify those with reading problems. Ye gods! Whatever happened to kindergarten where children played with sand and clay? Can't we wait until children are physically and mentally ready to read? What is the great rush? Do we want to emulate Japan where the pressure to succeed academically is so great that children commit suicide?

So, Diane, perhaps we should treasure the tree that takes it own time to give us bounty and our children who take their own time to grow.

Janet Grevillea,
WANGI WANGI 2267.

Please keep letters brief, clearly written and relevant to self-sufficiency topics. Letters pushing barrows (religious, political or other) will not be published.

Send letters to:
Grass Roots Feedback
PO Box 117, Seymour 3661.

Healthy Food For Bubs

by Jane 'Many Leaves' Lawrance, Babinda, Qld.

Emma's first year has flown happily by and I've had to rack my brains to remember everything I wanted to tell you. Piles of nappies, breast- and spoon-feeding and out of tune singing tend to obscure other memories.

OUR FOOD PHILOSOPHY

Andrew and I do our best to eat food that remembers where it came from and we don't consume sugared or processed foods. Emma is growing up to enjoy savoury wholefoods, all homemade with freshly ground flours. For the foods we eat a lot of and can't grow ourselves we have found organic and biodynamic sources; these include grains, milk powder and temperate zone fruits.

Emma enjoys exploring both the taste and the texture of new foods.

EMMA'S DAILY FOOD

We try to make Emma's diet all organic; she hasn't had any commercial baby food to date. Except for porridge, homemade biscuits and bread, Emma's likes and dislikes vary from day to day; we just do our best to provide a wide variety of foods. The following is an insight into how Emma's daily food has evolved and what's changed along the way. We don't have a concept of three meals a day for Emma – she browses continuously on what she needs.

First Months

I breast-fed Emma on demand for the first three months. Between three and six months her first solid foods were introduced: sieved organic porridge, mashed banana and avocado.

Half A Year Old

By six months, she healthily guzzled her water down, forming a good habit. Between five and six months I began to add a quarter-teaspoon of molasses to her porridge for extra iron. Cooked vegies and ripe fruits were all patiently sieved to smooth pastes (becoming increasingly chunkier over time): choko, sweet potato, potato, carrot, pumpkin. Sometimes the vegies were mixed with finely grated cheese or ricotta.

Beginning To Choose

Between seven and eight months I added small amounts of finely chopped up greens and cooked squashed peas to cooked vegie meals. At this stage Emma began to help herself to cubes of bread or biscuit, small strips of grated cheese, wedges of raw apple, pawpaw and mandarin with skin peeled off.

By about nine or ten months I stopped sieving her porridge and she was happily feeding herself with banana chunks, strawberries, mulberries, pepino, homemade wholemeal sponge cakes sweetened with soaked dried fruits, bread squares and larger cheese chunks. Under supervision she also tried varieties of tropical cherries (Brazilian and Cedar Bay), guava flesh, finely chopped greens, cherry tomatoes straight from the plants and yellow and red currants.

Happy First Birthday

From 11 to 12 months Emma's breast-feeds reduced to four a day. New foods include cooked organic liver (mushed up with fork – a bit rough, but no large chunks) mixed with cooked vegies. She has tried cooked broccoli pieces, but not with any enthusiasm. I've introduced cooked fish (checked for bones); some species (mullet, for example) have larger bones and are easier to prepare. Cooked egg yolk is sometimes mixed with her vegie meals.

Emma now helps herself from a bowl of home-picked fruits – stalks, skins and all – spitting out the skins she doesn't want. Great table manners! She's happy to eat cubed bread, biscuits, cheese, potato and pumpkin cooked until just firm to cut.

After each meal we feed Emma cheese squares to neutralise the acid in her mouth, followed by regular use of a baby's toothbrush. She watches me brush my teeth and joins in – sometimes using the wrong end, but she's learning!

Future Gastronomic Adventures

There are still lots more fruits to eat as our orchard matures. Emma will 'have a go' as new foods appear. She already eats a wide range of foods offering a broad spectrum of nutrients, textures, colours and flavours. I plan to breast-feed as long as I can and as long as Emma wants to. This encourages a close bond between us.

RECOMMENDED RECIPES

The following are some of Emma's favourite recipes.

Porridge

2 tbsp porridge oats
3 tbsp rice flour
¼ tsp blackstrap molasses (from six months onwards)

Place ingredients into a standard mug. Add boiling water, stirring well with a fork to avoid lumps, and allow to cool. I mix half with yoghurt for Emma's breakfast and the remainder is fed about 11am.

Fermented Flours

Use this mixture in the biscuit and sponge recipes. The evening before baking day I mix up 1 cup each of spelt flour, rye flour and barley flour with enough water to make it sloppy. I add a capful of cider vinegar to aid fermentation. The reason for doing this is that partially fermented foods are much easier to digest, with less stress on the body. I portion this mix off into bread, cake and biscuit mixes. You can use your own choice of flours.

Raisin And Date Mix

Make this mixture up the night before you want to make the biscuit recipe that follows.

650 g muscatel raisins
750 g dates
1 cup cracked wheat
1 cup cracked rye
1 cup porridge
1 capful cider vinegar

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and add water to cover well. Leave to soak overnight; all the water should be absorbed and ingredients soft.

Biscuits Or Banana Chews

When our bananas ripen I bake up trays of fruity banana chews that Emma loves to munch on. The biscuit recipe is the same, just without the bananas.

Quantities are very approximate as I add ingredients to get the right texture. I use a washing-up bowl to mix it all in!

2 cups fermented flour
8 cups minced banana (for chews)
8 cups minced raisin/date mix
2 cups plain wheat flour
2 cups rye flour
2 cups barley flour
½ cup gluten (because our flour is very heavy)
1 cup milk powder

grated ginger, lemon/lime juice and grated zest (for chews), to taste

linseed, sesame, seeds of your choice

optional: pinch of kelp or brewer's yeast

Mix all ingredients well. The bananas make it a very wet mix, so add flours as required. Bake on greased trays, approximately 2 hours at 180° C. Halfway through cooking time score squares into the mixture. Cook until firm and golden.

Emma's Little Fruity Sponges

¾ cup milk powder
¾ cup plain wheat flour
½ cup gluten
¼ cup barley
¼ cup rye flour
1 tsp bicarb soda
2 eggs, well beaten

grated ginger, lemon zest and juice, to taste

½ cup fermented flour
½ cup minced date and raisin mix
½ cup minced banana

approximately 200 ml water for a smooth consistency

Beat all ingredients well, folding in air for a fluffy light mix. Grease and lightly flour cake trays, spoon in mix. Cook in oven at 170 – 180° C until lightly golden.

Homemade Yoghurt

1 lt water per 1 heaped cup milk powder

approx 1 tbsp honey

250 g organic natural yoghurt, or previous batch as a starter

Dissolve milk powder and honey in water, stirring well. Heat until just coming to the boil. Allow to cool to blood temperature. Stir in yoghurt starter, pour into thermos flasks and seal. Allow 8 – 10 hours sitting time, pour out, remembering to keep a jar for a starter next time, and store in fridge.

A Healthy Snack

When we have to go to Cairns we sometimes snack on packets of organic crisps. We keep the glitzy foil bag, wash it, and fill it with homemade biscuits cut into squares, and carefully checked fully popped popcorn (no salt or sugar). At playgroup, she has her own crisp packet that looks just like those the other kids have, but is far healthier. Later, when Emma has more teeth, she'll have home-baked crisps made from our own taro, cassava and arrowroot.

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KIDS PAGE

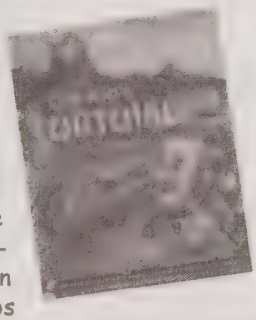
GREAT SURVIVORS

Some animals live a very long life and others very short - each species has an average life expectancy and there are extreme individual cases beyond the average. It seems that there are no rules about life expectancy, but in general large animals live longer than small species. There are many exceptions: animals with a slow metabolism tend to live longer than those with a fast one (metabolism is the chemical and physical processes continuously going on in living organisms).

Signs of old age are seldom seen in the wild as animals living under natural conditions rarely reach their maximum possible age because of high death rates due to diseases, predators, bad weather, accidents and competition for food and shelter. Most of the reliable info about life spans of animals comes from zoos where animals live under conditions ideally suited to prolong life (they are well fed and cared for and have no predators) and records can be kept. It is not surprising that the longest living individual animal is the giant tortoise because tortoises are virtually impregnable with their hard shells that they pull their head and legs into while they wait for predators to go away and they also have a particularly slow metabolism.

BOOK REVIEW

Darwin's Tortoise



By Robin Stewart

The book tells the true story of the world's oldest living creature - Harriet the Galapagos giant tortoise, which was hatched from an egg in 1830 in the Galapagos Islands. She was discovered by Charles Darwin in 1835 and he took her back to England with him where she lived with him mainly in hibernation. In 1842, she was sent to the warmth of Queensland where she lived mainly in Brisbane's City Botanic Gardens. She is now a happy 175 year old living at Australia Zoo on the Sunshine Coast. This is a really fascinating story about an exceptional animal and by the end of the book you are bursting to get to meet the dear old girl!

Published by Black Inc, Lvl 5/289 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000. Ph: 03-9654-2000. P/B, 150pp.

LONGEST LIVING ANIMALS

1 Giant tortoise - 175 years
2 Oregon sturgeon - 150 years
3 Eastern box turtle - 123 years
4 Human (Jeanne Calment) - 121 years
5 Egyptian vulture - 118 years

THE OLDEST HUMAN

Jeanne Calment lived in Arles, France, and died in 1997 at age 121. Some interesting things about her include the facts that she took up fencing at 85 years, still rode a bike at 100 years and released a rap CD called 'Time's Mistress' on her 121st birthday. The average life span of humans has changed dramatically through the ages as living conditions have changed, for example: Neanderthal average was 20 years, medieval England average was 33 years, and the current Western average is 77 - 81 years.

TORTOISE HAND PUPPET

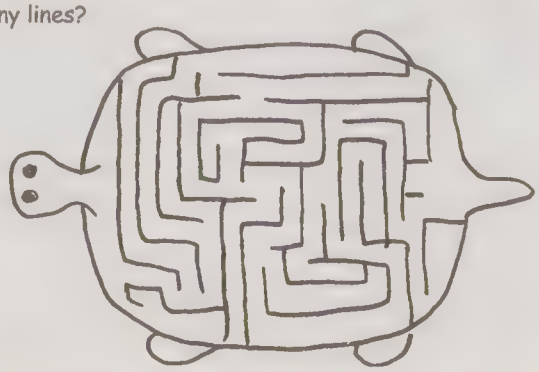
You will need:

- ★ 2 paper plates
- ★ green paper
- ★ green paint
- ★ stapler
- ★ long green sock
- ★ stuffing

Paint a paper plate to resemble a tortoise shell and paint the other plate for the bottom shell. Cut four legs from the green paper, place them between the two plates and staple them on. Stuff the toe end of the sock and sandwich it between the 2 plates so that the stuffed part is the tortoise head and the other end is the tail. Staple the two plates together and add eyes to the head.

TORTOISE MAZE

Can you start at the head and get to the tail without crossing any lines?



IN THE KITCHEN

Got the mid afternoon munchies? Looking through the pantry for something to snack on? Why not whip up one of these tasty treats for morning or afternoon tea.

GLUTEN-FREE SESAME BRITTLE

2 tbsp sesame seeds
2 cups sugar
¾ cup water
2 tbsp golden syrup
60 g butter
½ tsp bicarb soda

Place sesame seeds in pan, stir constantly over heat until lightly browned, then cool. Grease and line a 23 cm square tin with foil, extending foil over sides of tin. Combine sugar and water in pan, stir over heat without boiling until sugar has dissolved. Increase heat, boil without stirring until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Test by dropping a teaspoonful of mixture into a cup of cold water; it will set to a hard crack when it is ready. Add golden syrup and butter and stir gently over heat until just combined. Gently stir in sesame seeds and soda. Pour into tin, stand for about 5 minutes or until nearly set, lift out of tin and mark into squares with a knife, cutting nearly all the way through. When it's set, cut or break into squares.

Brittle can be made and stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

AFGHAN BISCUITS

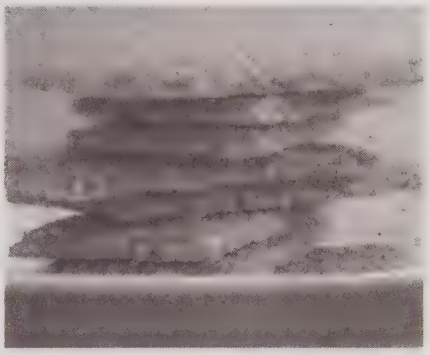
200 g unsalted butter
⅔ cup light brown sugar
1 egg
1 tsp vanilla essence
1½ cups plain flour
¼ cup cocoa powder
1 tsp baking powder
2 cups crushed cornflakes
¼ cup chopped hazelnuts

Icing

1½ cups icing sugar
2 tbsp cocoa powder
1 tbsp melted butter
2 – 3 tbsp warm water
¼ cup hazelnuts, extra

Preheat oven to 180° C. Grease and line a baking tray.

Beat butter and brown sugar until



light and creamy. Beat in egg and vanilla essence.

Sift in flour, cocoa powder and baking powder. Fold through along with the cornflakes and hazelnuts.

Spoon tablespoons of the mixture onto the prepared tray. Bake for 15 – 20 minutes or until crisp. Cool on a rack.

Sift icing sugar and cocoa into a bowl. Stir through butter and enough water to make a smooth icing. Ice the cooled biscuits and sprinkle with extra hazelnuts.

GLUTEN-FREE PEANUT COOKIES

125 g butter
65 g crunchy peanut butter (recipe below)
¾ cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 egg
1½ cups gluten-free plain flour
½ tsp bicarb soda
¾ cup roasted unsalted peanuts, toasted

Preheat the oven to moderate 180° C. Lightly grease oven trays.

Beat the butter, peanut butter, sugar and egg in a small bowl with an electric mixer until well combined. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl and stir in the remaining ingredients.

Roll heaped teaspoons of mixture into balls and place about 3 cm apart on prepared trays. Press lightly with a fork. Bake in a moderate oven for about 12 minutes or until browned lightly. Loosen biscuits and cool on trays.

PEANUT BUTTER

250 g unsalted roasted peanuts
1 tbsp oil, approx

Place peanuts on oven tray, bake at 180° C for about 5 minutes or until lightly browned, then cool. Process peanuts and half the oil until as smooth as desired. Add remaining oil if mixture is too dry. Makes about 1 cup (250 ml). Keep in fridge for 2 weeks.

COCONUT HONEY SLICE

125 g butter
½ cup honey
⅓ cup brown sugar
1½ cups coconut
1½ cups rolled oats
1 cup sultanas
½ cup wholemeal SR flour

Combine butter, honey and sugar in saucepan and stir over low heat, without boiling, until the butter is melted and the sugar is dissolved.

Combine remaining ingredients in large bowl and stir in butter mixture. Press mixture evenly into a greased 19 cm by 29 cm lamington pan. Bake at 180° C for about 20 minutes. Cool in pan and cut when cold. Slice will keep in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks, or frozen for up to 2 months.

EASY LITTLE FRIANDS

⅓ cup plain flour
1 cup icing sugar mixture
⅔ cup ground almonds
3 tsp finely grated lemon rind
4 egg whites, lightly beaten
120 g unsalted butter, melted

Sift flour and icing sugar into a bowl and stir in almonds and lemon rind. Add egg whites and melted butter and stir with a wooden spoon until smooth. Spoon mixture into 24 holes of two mini muffin tins and bake at 210° C for 8 minutes, then reduce heat to 200° C and cook for another 5 minutes or until risen and golden. Stand friands in tins for 5 minutes then turn out onto a wire rack and cool. Makes 24.

Family Favourites

by Val Smetheram, Wishart, Qld.

Ever watched those TV chefs gliding around classy kitchens, carefully layering food up in the centre of a plate (reminds me of layers of compost), then dribbling a fancy sauce like a necklace around it? Looks good doesn't it? I will admit I'm hooked on these shows. There's always something to learn even if you've been cooking for years.

At our house no one expects meals à la TV cooking shows, which is just as well; my style of cooking, although tasty, is somewhat more basic. I'd like to share some of our absolute favourite vegie recipes, guaranteed tried and tested.

CURRIED PUMPKIN SOUP

2 tsp oil
1 onion, diced
1 tbsp curry powder
2 lge potatoes, cut in quarters
250 g pumpkin, peeled and cubed
1 lt vegetable stock
½ tsp cinnamon
1 dsp brown sugar
salt and pepper, to taste

Heat oil in large pot over moderate heat. Add onion and curry powder. Cook, stirring occasionally, 3 – 5 minutes till onion is soft. Add potato, pumpkin, stock and cinnamon. Bring to boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Vegetables should be soft. Using food processor or blender, purée soup in batches. Remove from heat and add sugar, salt and pepper. Adjust consistency with water if you need to. This goes down well on cold nights. If you have any left over, freeze in serving sizes (shallow bowls), then you can have soup on the table very quickly.

COTTAGE CHEESE ROAST

1 cup milk
1 tsp Marmite
1 tbsp oil
500 g cottage cheese
2 cups rolled oats (or flaked rice)
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup milk
1 onion, chopped
1 tsp mixed herbs

Heat milk and dissolve Marmite in it. Add the oil to this then mix all ingredients together. Bake in greased baking dish in moderate oven for around 30 minutes.

This recipe freezes well. I usually make a double batch and freeze half for another time. Baked in shallow pans then cut in squares, this makes for quick retrieval when you're in a hurry.

ZUCCHINI BAKE

2 cups each of grated zucchini and carrot
frozen peas and corn
1 onion, chopped
2 or 3 eggs, beaten
1 cup soy bacon bits
salt and pepper, to taste
grated cheese or breadcrumbs, to top
oil
mixed herbs, optional

Mix first six ingredients well. The mixture should be fairly sloppy. Top with grated cheese or breadcrumbs and a sprinkle of oil. A sprinkle of herbs on top is very tasty. Bake in a shallow greased casserole dish in a moderate oven till mixture is firm and top is golden.

This recipe allows for much adjustment. Use more of the vegetables you like and meat eaters could use chopped bacon or ham. Once again, baked in shallow pans, it freezes well and this recipe amount makes a fairly large batch. Flavour improves after keeping for a couple of days or after having been frozen.

BAKED RICOTTA

500 g ricotta cheese
¼ cup fresh breadcrumbs
1 egg, beaten
1 tbsp chopped fresh herbs
¼ cup grated cheese

Mix well. Bake in a greased shallow casserole dish at 200° C for roughly 30 minutes. Chopped black olives and red onion are good mixed in this recipe. Any strong flavoured cheese can be used, but probably grated Parmesan is best for this. A great recipe for a picnic.

CURRIED RICE AND TOMATO CASSEROLE

1 cup brown rice
2 onions, finely chopped
1 tsp salt
1 tsp curry powder
1 cup tomato purée
1 – 2 cups water
3 tsp olive oil
2 firm tomatoes, cubed
1 green capsicum, cubed
1 red capsicum, cubed
½ cup sliced black olives

Place first seven ingredients in casserole dish and stir to mix. Bake, covered, at 180° C for 30 – 40 minutes, till tender and liquid absorbed. Stir through tomatoes, capsicums and olives. Bake a few minutes longer.

FRUIT PULP PUDDING

20 g butter
2 cups puréed fruit
1 tbsp sugar, if needed
200 ml breadcrumbs
2 eggs, beaten
brown sugar and cinnamon, for top

Melt butter and mix in fruit, sugar, breadcrumbs and eggs. Pour into a greased dish. Sprinkle top with brown sugar and cinnamon. Bake at 180° C till pudding is set and top is brown. Wonderful served warm with ice cream.

According to the women's magazine I found it in, this recipe comes from Mrs Beeton's original cookbook. It tastes great and is so simple to make. Any crumbled cake leftovers would be good in place of breadcrumbs too I think, although I haven't yet tried it.

Happy cooking!

When To Use Nails and Screws

by Cameron Buchanan, Rosebud, Vic.

Experienced builders and handypersons might take some knowledge for granted, but to the uninitiated something as basic as buying nails and screws for a particular job can be quite baffling. I hope the following information will set some would-be builders on the right track.

NAILS

It may appear obvious to some and not even be considered by others, but selecting the right nail for the job at hand can be crucial.

The variety of nails on the market today is huge; you can get a nail for any application, from simple bullet-head fixing nails to collated galvanised flat-head nails that are shot into the timber with nail guns, which are either pneumatic or gas powered. You can even get nails fired by a tool that uses a similar charge to a handgun and shoots the nail through steel to fix into concrete. These guns are used mainly in construction of factories and buildings where steel columns are required and might be considered a bit extreme around the home.

Use a flat-head nail in framing areas.

Iron nails of all sizes were made by the Roman legions more than 2000 years ago. The blacksmiths would forge them in workshops by smelting the iron ore and forming the nails by hand, producing a square tapered nail with a large head. The larger nails were used to hold the wooden stockade around the fort in place and to bind the timber roofing of the fort buildings.

Selecting the right nail for the right job is not that difficult; there are only a few general rules of thumb that should be followed. First, you must decide on the application. Is the nail going to be used in the framing process or any structural area? If so, then it is better to use a flat-head nail as there may be additional pressure on the nail to pull through the material.

If the purpose of the nail is for finishing, such as in architraves or skirting and the like, then a bullet-head nail is more suited because they are easier to punch and fill when preparing for painting. A finishing nail or brad is just a small bullet-head nail.

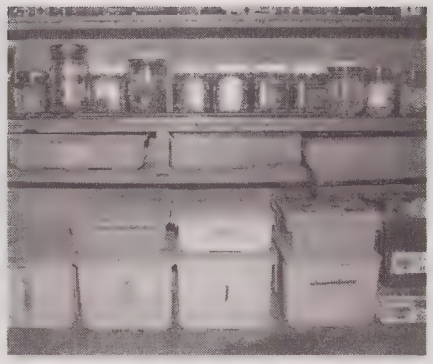
There are straight shank nails used for finishing, twist shank nails designed for hardwoods and fibbed shank nails designed for decks and hardwoods.

The nail you use should be 2.5 times as long as the thickness of what you are fixing into place. For example, if you are going to attach a timber board that is 20 millimetres thick to the end grain of another, the nail should be 50 millimetres long. Of course, this theory is not suitable if you are nailing into something that is only 20 millimetres thick because the nail would penetrate the bottom. In this case, select a nail that is 5 – 10 millimetres shorter than the combined thickness.

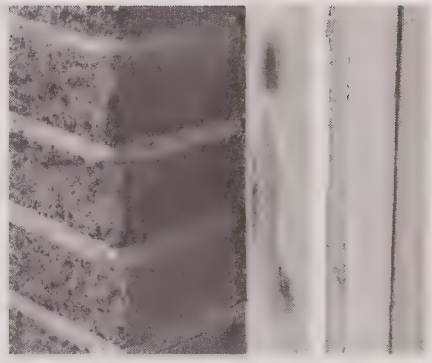
The location should also be considered. Is the job inside or outside? Again, there are many options including brass and copper, but basically only two different types of nail you need to decide between: steel or galvanised. Use steel nails inside and galvanised nails outside; it's that simple.

The reason for this is that if you use steel nails outside, in time they will begin to rust and if they have been painted over, the rust will leach through the timber and stain the painted surface. Of course, it is possible to use galvanised nails inside, although they cost

Try flat-head screws for decorative use.



Store nails in moisture-proof containers.



Using steel nails outside will result in rust.

considerably more than steel. Internal areas of high humidity or wet areas could be considered as having the same conditions as outside and galvanised nails could be substituted for steel.

Stainless steel decking nails are a relatively new option on the market and are shot into place with a nail gun. Although the end product is very good and it is much quicker than hand-nailing, the cost of stainless steel nails is high.

SCREWS

There are as many different screws on the market as there are nails, but the basic rule remains the same: select the right one for the job.

The easiest to work with are Philips-head screws; the ones with the star shape on the top where you insert the driver bit or screwdriver. Flat-head screws are still widely used, but are usually for decorative application such as door furniture and the like.

Most screws can be used for the majority of jobs around the home or building site. Plaster screws and wood screws do not differ a great deal and can be used for either application. Metal screws are made of a harder steel and are capable of creating their own thread when driven into metal. When reading the packet you should look for the general application directions, which will tell you if the screws are suitable for the job you require them for.

Tek screws were designed for holding down metal roofing. A tek screw has a hex head and a long shaft, usually 100 millimetres. It also has a tip on it that is similar to a drill bit so it can bite into corrugated iron. Tek screws are driven into metal with the aid of a hex head bit that can be put into a drill.

I have found that one of the most frustrating tasks in building when working with screws is using poor quality. Most of our work is done using either power tools or battery-operated tools. If you drive a cheap screw into a piece of timber with a drill there is a good chance you will round out the centre of the screw, usually when it is halfway in, leaving you with the added task of attempting to remove it and try again, turning a simple job into an annoying one. You will usually find these screws are the ones packed together with other pieces of hardware such as hinges, pad bolts and the like. To save all the heartache and sweating, I usually open the packet after purchase and put these screws aside for softwood jobs and buy a suitable pack separately. There is also the chance of the cheap screw shearing off because your drill has too much torque. If you find that this occurs when using your battery drill, try adjusting the clutch to regulate the drill's pressure, or you could drill a small pilot hole first.

STORING NAILS AND SCREWS

You should store your nails and screws in a dry place as any moisture will rust the ones made of steel. I find that gluing a nail or screw to the outside of the container they are stored in gives me an easy and quick reference to its contents when I am searching for a specific type.

The main thing to remember is that every application has a specific nail or screw designed for it. If you are unsure about which to use for your particular job, don't hesitate to ask someone at the hardware store.

Match nails and screws to the job at hand and you'll get a professional result like this.

Building questions can be emailed to: BBG@TPG.com.au or mailed to: Buchanan Building Group, PO Box 2121, Rosebud 3939. Fax: 03-5981-2495.

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Save Dollars

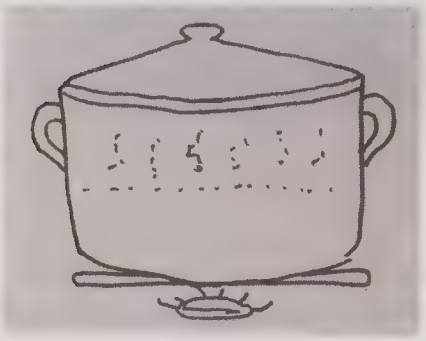
Conserve Energy In The Kitchen

by Ray Taylor, Darwin, NT.

There are numerous ways of conserving energy while cooking; try these thrifty tricks. When the need arises to buy more cooking utensils, don't race straight to the shop and buy new ones; second-hand shops, op shops and markets are all great hunting grounds for economical items.

Use a lid on saucepans during cooking to prevent energy loss. The contents will reach boiling point 18 percent faster in a pot with a lid on it. When boiling food, don't increase the heat source until the contents are bubbling rapidly; the extra heat will not raise the temperature, but only turn the liquid to a vapour, which is wasted at your expense.

Don't cook with more liquid than you need as this wastes energy heating matter that will not be used. Do, however, ensure there is enough liquid to avoid the contents boiling dry and being spoiled.

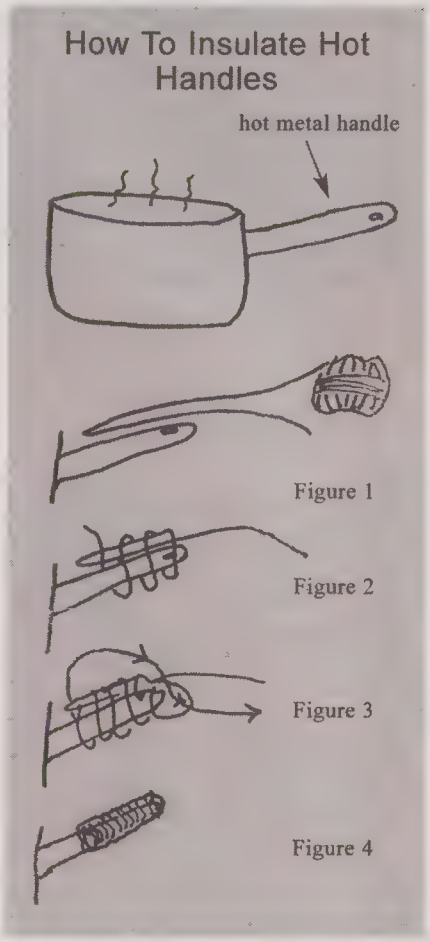


A rough black surface absorbs heat better than a smooth shiny surface. Iron and copper conduct heat better than shiny smooth aluminium.

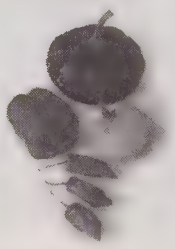
Choose a large enough utensil to fully cover the heat source. Try to match saucepan size with hotplate size.

Uninsulated handles can be insulated with string to make them safer to hold and prevent heat loss. Lay a length of string or cord along the handle you wish to insulate so there is a free end of string at the start and a loop at what will be the finishing end (figure 1). Wind the long end around the handle only for two or three rounds, then around handle and long loop of string so as to bury it (figure 2).

When you have closely wrapped the whole handle, thread the end through the loop of the initial length of string and pull the free end so as to drag the end of string under the wrapping (figure 3). Cut off ends. The string can be painted if you think it needs to be held in place more firmly (figure 4). It's essential not too have the heat too high when using this idea as string is flammable.



"Good food is our best medicine"



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Save Our Soap

by Ian Brothers, Grenfell, NSW.

What do you do with those soap ends that are too annoyingly small to wash with? In a well-organised household the last person to shower for that day will have the duty of 'welding' the old sliver of soap to the new bar. This is done by wetting the top of the new bar and firmly pushing and moulding the old sliver onto the wet surface, with special attention paid to around the edges. By the time the soap is used again the old portion will be stuck tight to the new bar. If people use that surface first, until the old sliver is gone, visitors will never know (unless they catch you out with a new weld) that you are doing your bit to minimise waste on this planet, where too many people don't have the luxury of soap, or very much water to wash with in any case. Don't add to rampant consumerism – save the soap ends.

When I was a kid Mum used the soap ends for washing up in the kitchen. This was before the advent of liquid detergent that promised to leave your dishes 'sparkling clean'. This ordinary soap would leave smears on glasses and crockery, unless rinsed, but ingesting the stuff was not likely to kill you.

A device called a soap saver was used in those days. I thought I'd seen the last of that archaic technology until I found a new one in a camping supplies shop. It was, to me, rather expensive for an item made of chromed wire mesh. You use the soap saver by putting the soap in the receptacle part of the device and waving it about in your sinkful of hot water to dissolve some of the soap. I guess this was the old way of obtaining liquid detergent.

I would not recommend the use of a soap saver and leftover bathroom soap for washing dishes, though pure, unscented soap such as Velvet or Sunlight is fine. However, with a dash of eucalyptus oil added to the water your leftover soap would be good for hand-washing woollens and other clothing. After use, shake your saver over the sink of water and rest it on one of those plastic trays from the supermarket that prepackaged vegies are packed on. Unnecessary packaging; now there's another subject relevant to rampant consumerism. You'd better use that old saucer or ugly souvenir cheese plate Auntie Gladys gave you to rest the saver on between uses.

Soap ends can be grated (watch your fingertips) and used as you would use soap flakes in the laundry. They can also be reconstituted into bars, if you could be bothered.

In general, we use far too much soap and far too much liquid detergent and laundry powder. The water does most of the work. Soaking your washing will get rid of most of the dirt; stains are another matter. Contrary to popular opinion, soap does not kill many, if any, pathogens. It works because it is partly soluble in oil, including the body oil on your skin, and partly in water. Pathogen numbers are decreased when the soap/oil/water mixture is washed away under running water.

Saving soap is simple and easy and shows we can all do our little bit by cutting down on, and in many cases ceasing, our materialistic tendencies and encouraging others to do so as well.

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Water Testing Made Easy

by Dr Dennis Arne, Bright, Vic.

I'm often asked by people to test their water in order to tell them whether it's safe. However, that's not an easy question to answer because it all depends on what you're testing for. The number of potential contaminants runs into the hundreds, although most of these are seldom found, and a complete scan for all possible contaminants would run into thousands of dollars in analytical costs. Instead, the approach usually taken is to select a number of common elements and compounds in water and test to see if they exceed the recommended guidelines. This is normally taken care of by water authorities for consumers on reticulated water supplies, but becomes the responsibility of private landowners where drinking water is obtained from rainwater tanks, bores, springs or streams.

Find out how safe your water supply is with some basic testing procedures.

WATER QUALITY GUIDELINES

The National Health and Medical Research Council and the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand have set recommended maximum limits for both inorganic and organic contaminants in drinking water under the National Water Quality Management Strategy. A free copy of the guidelines may be downloaded from: www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/publications/synopses/eh19syn.htm

The guidelines cover those organisms and chemicals that have been reported in Australian drinking water, or might conceivably be found in drinking water. The list is extensive, so it's necessary to select a few items for routine analysis. The ones described below were selected because they provide a good indication of the quality of water, and because analyses can be performed quickly on site or with mail order kits to provide screen testing.

Units Of Measurement

Before proceeding, the reader should become familiar with the common units of measurement in dealing with water chemistry. Small quantities are measured in terms of milligrams per litre (mg/l), which in low salinity waters is equivalent to parts per million (ppm). Toxic metals are usually measured as the number of parts per billion (ppb) or µg/l. To put these units in perspective, one ppb is equivalent to 1 cent in 10 million dollars or 1 minute in 1900 years! Modern analysis can now detect some contaminants down to the parts per trillion range.

MICROORGANISMS

Coliform bacteria are widespread within the environment. Their presence in drinking water does not necessarily indicate the presence of pathogens from faecal contamination such as *Escherichia coli* or thermotolerant coliforms. However, they are common indicator organisms and their presence indicates potential contamination or failure of decontamination systems. Therefore, according to the guidelines, no coliform bacteria should be detected in drinking water.

PHYSICAL PROPERTIES

According to the national drinking water guidelines, the pH of drinking water should lie between 6.5 and 8.5 in order to avoid corrosion of pipes and fittings. Corrosion can result in potential contamination by metals such as copper or, in older homes, lead. The pH is an indication of the number of hydrogen ions in solution, and the scale is logarithmic. That means water with a pH of 6 contains 10 times more hydrogen ions than water with a pH of 7.

Total Dissolved Solids

Total dissolved solids (TDS) is a measure of dissolved elements in solution and is a good indication of water salinity. It is generally estimated from the electrical conductivity of the water, and then converted to TDS. According to the guidelines, drinking water should not exceed 500 mg/l (500 ppm), but this is an aesthetic limit, which means it's the level at which most people would detect salinity in the water. Animals will tolerate much higher levels of TDS in water.

Turbidity

Turbidity is a measure of the amount of suspended material in water. It's what makes river or dam water look muddy. Drinking water should not exceed

5 NTU (nephelometric turbidity units), although a limit of 1 NTU is desirable if disinfection is required, as suspended material in water reduces the efficiency of most disinfection procedures. It can be measured using a turbidity meter or estimated visually using a turbidity tube.

Hardness

Hardness is a measure of the amount of dissolved calcium and magnesium in solution. Hardness may be temporary, if it is due to the dissolution of carbonate minerals such as limestone, or permanent, if it is due to the presence of chloride salts. Hardness should not exceed 200 mg/l in order to avoid scaling problems in pipes and kettles.

INORGANIC CHEMICALS

Arsenic

This metal is found in rocks associated with certain types of gold deposits common in Australia; it is used in treated pine timber, and was previously used in agriculture as a sheep dip and to treat timber structures for white ants. It is considered to be carcinogenic in humans by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. The maximum allowable concentration in Australian drinking water is 0.007 mg/l (7 ppb), which is slightly lower than the 10 ppb level recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). Levels of up to 15 ppb have been recorded in major Australian reticulated supplies.

Lead

Lead may find its way into drinking water supplies from corrosion of pipe fittings joined with lead-based solder in older homes, from lead flashing used on older roofs capturing rainwater, in natural groundwater, or from mining and smelting activities. It has a cumulative effect in humans that can lead to damage to the nervous system, particularly in small children, foetuses and pregnant women. Drinking water in Australia should not exceed 0.01 mg/l (10 ppb) lead.

Copper

Copper may enter drinking water through corrosion of copper pipes, particularly where the water is slightly acidic, or from natural groundwater in certain geological situations. A maximum level of 2 mg/l (2 ppm) is recommended, as excessive levels can cause gastrointestinal discomfort or, in extreme cases, cirrhosis of the liver.

Nitrate

Nitrate (NO_3) should not exceed 50 mg/l (50 ppm) for bottle-fed infants under 3 months of age, or 100 mg/l (100 ppm) for humans over 3 months. Nitrite (NO_2) should not exceed 3 mg/l (3 ppm), as this is the toxic form of nitrogen which can cause the breakdown of haemoglobin in the blood. Nitrogen contamination in water commonly results from nitrogen fertilisers.

Iron

Iron in drinking water is not considered to constitute a health hazard, but a maximum level of 0.3 mg/l (0.3 ppm) is recommended on aesthetic grounds. Levels above this produce an unpleasant taste and, at around 5 ppm, will start to stain the laundry and garden fence. Iron is quite common in groundwater and is usually in a form that will not visibly discolour the water. Upon reaction with the atmosphere, the iron rusts to produce an orange-red colour.

Chloride

Chloride also does not have a recognised health limit, but an aesthetic level of 250 mg/l (250 ppm) is recommended. Levels above 500 mg/l will start to affect salt-intolerant plants in the garden.

Phosphate

Phosphate is generally elevated in surface waters into which domestic, industrial and agricultural runoff is added. Although there are no guidelines recommended for phosphate in drinking water, elevated levels may result in the bloom of cyanobacteria, some of which can produce toxic microcystins. Therefore, elevated phosphate levels are to be discouraged.

ORGANIC CHEMICALS

Atrazine and, to a lesser extent, simazine, are common herbicides used in agriculture and forestry that have been implicated in the contamination of groundwater in Australia. Although atrazine is known to be carcinogenic in test animals, there is no firm evidence to suggest it may be carcinogenic in humans. This uncertainty has led to significant differences in guidelines from various health organisations. The health value is 40 ppb for atrazine and 20 ppb for simazine in Australia, although detectable levels would be of concern. By contrast, the WHO has a guideline value of 2 ppb, whereas the US EPA has issued guidelines of 3 ppb for atrazine and 4 ppb for simazine. Ideally, no pesticides or herbicides should be detected within drinking water at the modern analytical limit of detection (parts per trillion range).

TESTING METHODS

There are a number of approaches to testing drinking water. Traditionally, samples have been collected and sent to a laboratory for analysis. The analytical methods vary for the different elements to be tested, but the results are generally very precise. This is not the same as saying the results are accurate because water chemistry can change during sample collection and transport. This is particularly true of iron, and phosphate cannot be analysed if the water is shipped in a plastic bottle. Therefore, in most scientific surveys, some analyses are often done on site. On-site methods vary as well, ranging from complex ion-specific electrodes to simple test strips for semi-quantitative screen testing. The latter are often available in simple kits that allow you to test water for some contaminants yourself.

Naturally, given the range of methods available for analysing water, there will also be a range of costs involved. Laboratory analysis ranges from as little as $100 to over $200, depending on how many elements and compounds are determined, whether the lab is accredited by NATA (National Association of Testing Authorities), and whether any advice on water treatment is provided. Analysis for potential contaminants beyond those discussed here can often be obtained, but prices vary.

Does the testing tell you whether your water is safe to drink? Yes, but only for the contaminants the water has been tested for!

Feeding Bub Naturally

by Annette Stolz, Alice Springs, NT.

I first became aware of breast-feeding when I saw my brother feeding frequently at my mother's breast when I was two. At 22, in the 1960s, I married my love and started my own family. It was the midwives who put my babies to the breast, but they insisted I follow each breast-feed with either glucose water or diluted formula from a bottle. I was confused. My brother hadn't been given bottles, and my dad, who'd been a dairy officer, had never told me of any farmer who bottle-fed a sucking calf after the teat. My love died and I started midwifery training where two of my senior nurses taught me to show mothers how to put their own babies to the breast and suggested I become a lactation consultant.

STUDYING LACTATION

There is no set course leading to a qualification in lactation, although courses are available. Anyone can become a lactation consultant, however, there are criteria. You must prove over 2500 hours' contact with and assistance to breast-feeding women and a minimum of 45 hours of breast-feeding education before paying for and sitting an internationally accredited six-hour examination held on the last Monday of July annually around the world. Passing this exam gives qualification as an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) that is recognised worldwide. Ten years after initial certification IBCLCs are required to recertify by examination. This ensures a gold standard in lactation management for mothers and babies.

FOOD FOR MUMS

People often ask what foods breast-feeding mothers can have, or not have, and I think of my dad again talking about milking cows needing good pastures with high protein content. My advice is the same. Mothers should eat a wide variety of foods over three nutritious meals a day, including a hefty high-protein breakfast and three snacks per day. Breast-feeding mothers should be hungry.

New mum Amanda, with one-week-old baby Nicholas, found breast-feeding initially a challenge but ultimately rewarding.

Mothers are often told not to have various foods. At times babies do react and get loose stools if mothers have, for example, too much citrus, stone fruit, onions, overcooked vegetables or chocolate. Sometimes babies are sensitive to the milk that mothers drink. It's impossible to make a blanket statement about any particular food, it depends on the baby. If it is obvious that a food is causing distress or a reaction to the baby, that food should be eliminated until much later.

BEST BREAST-FEEDING TIPS

Sometimes mothers get sore nipples when they start breast-feeding. This can be a shock as the perception is that breast-feeding is natural and therefore should be trouble free. Some tenderness is usually felt in the first week, but this is short-lived.

• Introduce baby to the mother within the first half-hour of birth. Mothers learn to position themselves and baby has to attach to the breast properly so that optimal attachment can be maintained.

• Try different positions such as the underarm hold, modified underarm and straddle hold.

• Offer the newborn baby the soft, rounded breast underside to encourage a wide-open gape, like a yawn, to attach correctly, with the nipple, areola and some of the breast tissue into the mouth as nature intended.

• Start feeding on the least sore side first so that the milk is ready for the sore side.

• Try expressing a little milk off first if breasts are engorged, then feed baby. Place some expressed milk on the nipple after the feed and let it air-dry.

• Analgesics may be necessary for pain relief.

• If the pain is very bad, it might be necessary for the mother to express or pump milk and cup-feed the baby with the expressed milk.

• Apply colostrum/breast-milk after feeds and allow to air-dry. Lansinoh or Marcalan nipple cream can provide relief when used correctly: apply small amounts to the nipple only, not the areola; use after breast-feeds to allow time for skin to absorb the cream. There's no need to wash it off prior to feeding.

• Watch baby for early feeding cues and put baby to the breast. If baby is left too long she can get ravenously hungry and clamp down, causing nipple damage.

Contrary to popular opinion, sagging breasts are not caused by breast-feeding; the tendency starts in pregnancy. Breasts are held in place with suspensory ligaments that soften, as do all other ligaments in the pregnant woman's body, under the influence of the hormone progesterone.

WHEN THERE'S A TODDLER

Preplan suitable toddler's activities when breast-feeding an infant sibling.

Cradle Position

Transitional Position

Underarm Position

Side-Lying Position

It's important for new mums to find the most comfortable position. Drawings from National Health and Medical Research Council's *Infant Feeding Guidelines for Health*, 1998.

Perhaps you can give the toddler a 'baby' to 'breast-feed' when Mum is feeding her infant. Other hints include playing tapes and bringing out new or special toys that are only used during breast-feeding times. Feeding time can become a relaxing period for all if the toddler snuggles up on the lounge for a story. There will be occasions, too, when the toddler can have special time with Dad while Mum feeds the baby.

MASTITIS

Many women suffer from mastitis if babies do not drain the breast properly or for other reasons. There might be plugged ducts leading to a back-up of milk that bursts through the milk producing cells. The body thinks there's an invasion of foreign proteins and reacts with an 'inflammatory response' of extra blood supply, heat, chills and a feeling of illness in the mother. This is not necessarily an infection, although the mother should go to bed.

The preferred treatment is not to wean, but to encourage the milk flow by putting the baby to the breast more often, or expressing or pumping. Give comfort by using a vibrator and/or soaking the breast in a solution of Epsom salts in very warm water. Use one or two fistfuls of salts into a dish large enough for the breast to soak in for at least 10 minutes, three to four or more times a day. Do this before a breast-feed and use cool compresses in between feeds. Cool cabbage leaves have been used with great success; change two-hourly, or use any other cool compress for relief.

PROMOTING BREAST-FEEDING

Lactation consultants work with other health professionals to support, protect and promote breast-feeding. Human milk is the best food for human babies and is best fed exclusively for the first six months of life. Then solid food is introduced between 6 and 12 months. The World Health Organization recommends continuing breast-feeding for two years and beyond.

One New Mum's Experience

Amanda Young had a natural birth with new son Nicholas and is enjoying being as ecofriendly as possible, using cloth nappies and carrying her bub in a sling. Breast-feeding was an integral part of this.

'I was a bit nervous about breast-feeding, but was determined to do it even if it proved difficult. Nicholas was really sleepy for the first day and didn't really want to feed, but on his second day was much more alert, which made it easier.

'Traditional cradle hold has proved to be the most comfortable position with the most control. Basically, if you get the attachment right every single time, it all works, but otherwise you can get really sore. My nipples got grazed during one or two feeds at the start and hurt for about five days after, but we got through it. I was amazed that 20 minutes the wrong way could cause so much trouble. I was very vigilant after that. Now I'm an old hand of two weeks, breast-feeding is becoming much more relaxing. Nicholas knows his way around them now, so he can latch on better and I can concentrate on something else instead of watching each suck. I was recommended to go by feel, not by sight, but I couldn't help it!

'I recommend getting as much help as possible at the start so you get into good habits early. Even if it means everyone and anyone handling your bosoms, it's worth it!'

Travelling Light

by Roberino, Arrawarra Beach, NSW.

When travelling, you don't want to be weighed down by excess luggage. Travel light and enjoy your trip more. Here's how Roberino did it in his gypsy days.

I travelled in summers and worked in winters so I didn't need lots of heavy clothes, just very light ones. I had a 20-litre kit bag that I think came from an Oxfam shop in London, but these days I'd opt for a small backpack of the same size. I used to pack a toothbrush and paste, hairbrush (NuBrush type – about $2 at chemists in Oz), small towel, map, swimmers, two underpants, two socks, two shirts, lightweight spray or shower jacket, small cloth hat (or I wore a larger straw hat), small bottle of spring water and multivitamin pills.

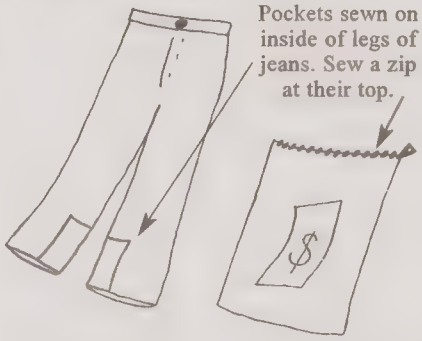
I used to hand-wash socks, underpants and shirts (lightweight Indian cotton) in a basin at night and they would be dry by morning. I'd use the open window for a draught or breeze to accelerate the drying and a strange double-stranded but thin rope especially made for this job: you didn't need pegs, just tucked the clothing in between the two stands and bingo they stayed there quite firmly.

I was tempted to take a camera, but decided on buying postcards and sending those. You ask for them back to fill up your photo albums when you get home. Friends love receiving postcards and are happy to save them for you.

To prevent being robbed I sewed two pockets inside my jeans' cuffs to hold passport, credit and phone cards and 'big' money. If I knew I soon required anything from my antimugger's pockets, I'd go to a loo and access passport etc by dropping jeans and getting at pockets from inside the legs of the jeans. Friends who used this idea weren't robbed by bandits in South America who frisked them and concluded they were just poor travellers and so took nothing.

If I wanted some food to take on a hike, I'd only buy fruits in season and use the plastic shopping bag to carry them. These days a large bum bag would be a blessing, but they weren't invented yet when I was travelling. As food is 50 percent water, dehydrated food is much, much lighter and is available at many health food and hiking equipment stores. It keeps for a long time without going bad and when you get to your destination you just add water.

I almost forgot a most important luggage item: pure raspberry jam is a miracle cure for tummy upsets, which crop up everywhere. It has to be made from real raspberries, such as a home-made one from a raspberry farm. I took this everywhere and on the odd occasion when I could feel something foreboding I'd have about a teaspoon



or two of the jam. Magic. It's an old-time remedy but brilliant. I decanted mine into a plastic bottle – about 300 milligrams – around two-thirds full so as not to stretch my luck. It wouldn't be too good if it leaked onto clothes.

Begin with your backpack packed very lightly; you can always buy more if necessary. If the weather turns cold, for example, buy warm gear from an op shop and put it in a charity bin when you no longer need it, or post it home if you really like it.

You'll find that travelling light removes all the hassles and constraints of lugging heavy gear around on your much anticipated holiday. It might even free you up for a few spur-of-the-moment adventures while you are there. Try it and see!

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The Australian Langshan

by Megg Miller,
Nagambie, Vic.

If the breeds we've already discussed haven't suited and you're still casting around for a farm fowl that is robust, hardy, a decent layer, and doesn't cost a fortune to feed, check out the Australian Langshan. It's a bottler of a breed and largely Australian made. Aussie Langshans were renowned for their excellent utility properties in the past and although selection criteria hasn't been directed down this path in more recent times, they're still a useful backyard or farm fowl. A miniature form exists too and is one of the most frequently recommended birds for children due to its placid nature and low maintenance requirements.

SAME BIRD, NEW NAME

Until a few years ago this breed was known as the Chinese Langshan. Devotees felt the Chinese appellation was a misnomer as all the standardising and refining was due to the efforts of local breeders and while Langshan undoubtedly originated from China, the uniform specimens around today are the result of the skill of Australian breeders. If you're looking through old newspapers or agriculture department publications, the Chinese Langshan that may be mentioned is the breed we now call Australian Langshan.

MORE LANGSHAN CONFUSION

Yes, there is another Langshan and to avoid confusion it's best to get family matters cleared up at the start. A trio of big, black-plumaged fowls was introduced into England in the 1870s, a gift for a Major Croad. They were assigned the name Croad Langshan, the latter purportedly the Chinese word for the mountain that towered over the monastery where the fowls were found. Further importations were made and the 'Croads' were discovered to be strong, hardy birds that produced deep brown coloured eggs. They were also good winter layers, a characteristic not found at the time in any English breeds. Croad Langshans were brought to Australia in the late 1870s.

The Croad drifted into obscurity after a brief period of popularity, but it has the distinction of having helped create numerous 'composite' breeds. Towards the end of the 19th century poultry men started crossing pure breeds to create new, designer breeds and the Croad Langshan was used in the make-up of Black Orpingtons, Dutch Barnevelders (and via this breed, Welsummers) and French Marans and Faverolles. There is no doubting that the deep brown shell colour of today's modern hybrids owes it origins to the Croad Langshan, but of course via generations of its crossbred descendants. The Croad shouldn't be confused with the Australian Langshan; not only is it a much heavier bird, but has a different shape and much looser plumage. Croads are rare and desperately need dedicated breeders to boost numbers.

Above: A standard sized Aussie Langshan goes tail to tail with a bantam.

AUSSIE LANGSHAN, QUIET ACHIEVER

It would not be exaggerating to say that the status the Australian poultry industry enjoyed over decades of the 20th century owed much to the utility traits of the Aussie Langshan. The early specimens that ships' pursers brought into the country on return trips from China were a scruffy lot, but coped well in hot conditions and were great layers. They came to the forefront when laying trials commenced in NSW, suffering fewer mortalities and consistently being in the top producing group.

What isn't well known is that specimens of this breed were crossed into Utility Orpingtons and from these the Australorp was developed. When the 'improved' Utility Orpingtons were taken over to England, breeders there

were never able to produce birds that laid as well as those in Australia. The cagey Aussies kept their secret and went on to develop Australorps that held world records for laying. One former Department of Agriculture employee says he remembers seeing many Australorps with lightly feathered legs, proof if ever it was needed of the Langshan infusion. Regrettably, the Aussie Langshan was never given credit for passing on its superior laying ability or strong constitution and most people in the poultry world would be unaware of its contribution.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Aussie Langshans are close feathered, neat looking birds that stand very upright. They're medium sized with a reasonably broad flat back, fairly deep well-rounded breast, close carried wings, and a well-furnished tail with slightly longer lesser sickles and sickle feathers. Legs are lightly feathered, and this soft short feathering continues down and along the outer toes. A small head with large prominent eyes carries a medium-sized single comb, ear lobes and wattles. Adult weights are from 2.70 – 3.20 kilograms for males and 2.25 – 2.70 kilograms for females. Bantam males are 910 – 1020 grams and females 740 – 850 grams.

The common plumage colour is beetle green black, but there are also white and blue coloured varieties.

UTILITY PROPERTIES

It's all good news on the utility side; the breed matures early and, when cared for appropriately, lays satisfactorily for a number of years. Hens produce a good-sized brown egg, though some strains may lay eggs that have lighter coloured shells. Expect hens to go broody and to rear young, but Aussie Langshans are not fiercely broody like some Game breeds so return to lay fairly quickly.

Temperament is docile and bantams in particular make lovely kids' pets. This docility allows the breed to tolerate confinement in backyard housing very well. If given the opportunity though, they are busy foragers and thus ideal for small farms.

If you like home-grown chicken, you'll get a smallish carcass, but with lots of breast meat where you want it. The meat is reputed to be fine grained and flavoursome and offal is minimal so there is little wastage. The only criticism is difficulty in removing all the black pin feathers from the carcass. The presence of a little dark fluff isn't off-putting to those of robust constitution, but may evoke complaint from some members of the family.

MANAGEMENT TIPS

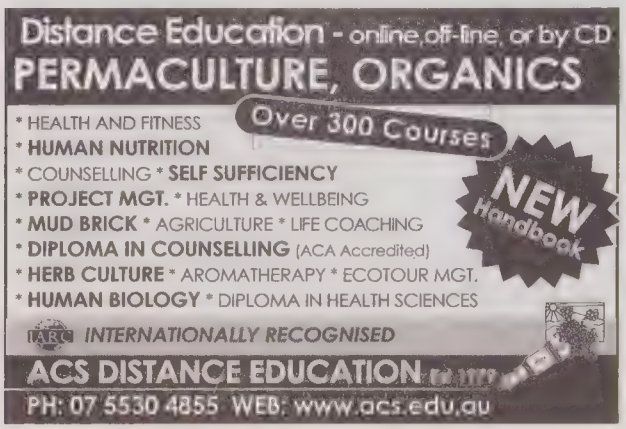
Aussie Langshan are adaptable and do well in most management systems. They handle extremes of weather well and clearly thrive in very warm climates as they are extremely popular in northern New South Wales and in Queensland. The only specialised advice would be to keep an eye on scaly leg; feather-legged breeds are more susceptible than clean-legged ones and Aussie Langshans carry light leg feathering.

A VERSATILE BREED

The Aussie Langshan is a top show bird so if exhibiting is a cherished goal you should have little trouble obtaining stock that is suitable for the show bench or for breeding. If you're after an easy-care breed that's economical to keep, you won't find a more suitable one. And if you just want a couple of pets, the bantam Langshan will delight. Plenty of people keep or breed Aussie Langshans so availability of stock is good and there is an active breed club that costs only $10 to join. If you're watching your cents or think you're too busy to keep a couple of fowls, the Aussie Langshan may just suit. It really is a bottler of a breed.

This Croad Langshan rooster is clearly a different variety from the Aussie.

The Langshan Club of Australia can be contacted on 02-9580-2895 or C/- Secretary, 24 Princes St, Mortdale 2223.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Living With Floods

Starting The Big Cleanup

by Peter Crawley, Oakleigh, Vic.

What to do about household electrical wiring after a flood was an area about which I found extremes in the advice given. It ranged from just letting the wiring dry and then testing before use, to the complete rewiring of the house. The key reason for this variation is the type of wiring used. If the cable is old, in particular cloth covered, in all cases a complete rewire is recommended. If the cable is fairly new and plastic coated, the issue became one of how much water had entered the plastic coating and how to get rid of it. As a consequence, I really can't provide any definitive recommendation in this area, however, the key point is not to connect or use power until, at the very minimum, the wiring has been fully dried, inspected and tested by a qualified electrician and approved safe for use.

TEMPORARY LINES

Making sure that the wiring is fully dry will take time, so some form of emergency power will be needed. Where immediate use of electric power is essential, for example, to provide safe and efficient lighting for the many extra hours of cleanup work after flooding, temporary power lines may be run by an electrician. If you are using such a temporary power line, make sure it is earth leakage protected and kept high and dry. No matter what, avoid letting any of the cord run along wet or damp surfaces.

CHECK FOR MUD

I must state one item that definitely should be checked. Someone who was flooded out a couple of years ago told me that he was forever having electrical problems and had decided to go looking. He found that all the mud had not been removed from behind the fuse box, in junction boxes, behind the light switches, power outlets and the light globe holders. This mud then attracted moisture, which caused all sorts of problems, ranging from a small fire to blown fuses and circuit breakers. What got him so angry was that the wiring had been inspected and tested by a qualified electrician and approved safe for use.

He recommends that before the power is turned on and while the house is drying out you remove the covers from all switches, power outlets etc that have been submerged. Then very carefully pull the units (the switch, wires etc) out about five centimetres from the box, but *do not* remove any of the electrical connections. Doing this will not only dry out and highlight any mud and silt behind the units, but help to circulate air in the electrical conduits and in the walls to help them dry out quickly. If mud and silt are found behind the connections, enlist the help of a registered electrical authority or an electrician to replace or clean and check them before reconnection. In this case the individual concerned also had old cloth-covered wiring, which certainly didn't help.

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

All appliances that have had working parts submerged in water should be serviced by an appropriate servicing organisation, or should be replaced with new. Just remember that running electrical equipment before it is properly cleaned and serviced could at the very minimum seriously damage it, but could also cause an electrical fire. This in particular is true of any item that is driven by an electrical motor such as fridges, washing machines, food processors and the like.

In most cases flooded electrical equipment can be serviced, however, balance the cost of servicing them against their replacement cost in today's market.

After they've been serviced, washers, dryers and electrical units used for food preparation that have been immersed in floodwater will need to be sanitised.

Washing Machine

To disinfect the washer, pour chlorine bleach into the partly filled machine (with hot water) and complete a standard washing cycle at the hot setting. Once complete, leave the lid or door open to dissipate the smell and completely dry the inside. Before normal use, wash a load of clean rags using the longest washing cycle. These rags will have to be rewashed before use.

Dryer

For dryers, unplug the unit and wipe all areas of the drum and dryer door with a cloth dipped in bleach and water solution. Leave the dryer door open until all parts are thoroughly dry. Then plug in and dry a load of clean rags that have been wetted before resuming normal use. Rewash rags before use.

Food Preparation Appliances

Inspect all food preparation appliances, and discard any that have porous materials (such as wood, plastic or rubber) in contact with food. Any items that contain deep cracks that are in contact with food should be thrown away as well. These items can't be sanitised.

You have already had the appliances checked as electrically safe, so the next task is to sanitise them. I recommend scrubbing them with a brush in a hot detergent solution, followed by rinsing in clean hot water and then rinsing again in a chlorine solution. Be careful to keep electrical connections clear of water and make sure they are not immersed.

Electrical cords should be checked as well. In fact, I recommend that you replace them as few food preparation appliance cords can take a dunking.

RESTORING GAS APPLIANCES

If you live in the city, it is advised that you contact your gas supplier to see if they recommend turning on the house gas. It may not be possible yet, for two reasons: the gas mains have been turned off to reduce the possibility of gas leaks in a flooded area or, if the floodwater level was high enough, water will probably have entered the gas mains. If this has occurred, you may not be able to receive any gas at your house until the mains are cleared.

If you are in the country or using bottled gas, just check the connection, or reconnect if applicable, and turn on the gas main. As water may have entered the piping, do not worry if water is expelled for a short time, just keep on attempting to relight all pilot lights with the long-neck gas grill lighter that you purchased prior to the flood for this role.

If a problem occurs and you cannot light the pilot light for an appliance, turn off its individual shut-off valve and proceed to the next appliance, making sure not to forget any. If an individual appliance shut-off plug valve is not available or is inaccessible, turn off the main gas valve and seek professional assistance. Typical appliances that may have pilot lights include gas heaters, furnaces, boilers, hot water heaters and certain old-style ovens, grills and gas dryers.

It should be noted that the local plumbers/repairers and gas utility workers can often repair or replace any critical parts on gas appliances and get them working rather quickly. The American Gas Manufacturer's Association (AGMA) recommends that any gas appliance that has had its working parts submerged in floodwaters be replaced. When I contacted the local gas authorities I received many different answers, some inconsistent. However, they would not counter the AGMA response because it seemed very reasonable as any trapped water and flood sediment in critical parts can cause corrosion later and affect the safe operation of the parts and the appliance. In fact, one supplier, who would not be quoted, stated that explosions have occurred in Australia for this very reason.

HEATING SYSTEMS

Any heating system exposed to floodwater must be cleaned before reuse; this is true for all types: gas, electric, oil and wood-fired. I will provide general details on what to clean or check for in a heater. In some cases it may only be applicable to a wood or coal heater, but check just in case and use your own best judgement.

Cleaning A Heater

Even if the heating system works after the flood, silt-clogged chimneys and smoke boxes could cause a furnace or firebox to overheat and, in the worst-case scenario, explode. Check the inside of a flooded furnace before starting any fires. Flush sediment from the chimney with a hose or a swab tied on a long stick.

If the heater is jacketed, clean out all mud between the stove and the outside casing. If the casing can be removed to give working space, do so. Make sure that the draught breather is not blocked, thus significantly reducing the effectiveness of the heater.

In oil-burning systems, inspect the fuel storage tank for opened or weeping seams. Dismantle the burner and clean all parts with kerosene. Inspect and clean the air blower. Replace fuel filters and clean and dry out the fuel pump. Remove housings that enclose gears and clean the gears thoroughly with kerosene, as any grit in the gears will cause undue wear.

Be extra careful that the fan motor, electric ignition system and wiring are completely clean and dry before you turn on the electricity. Please note that electric motor cleaning and electrical checking should be left to electricians and qualified repair people.

Check any chimney that has been in

Hosing out all the mud after a flood is a tiresome job that must be done. Be especially careful with electrical wiring at this time.

contact with water for leaks that may have developed from dissolved mortar. Most chimneys have a foundation in the ground. Check the foundation, and make sure it has not been undermined. A good way to check for small leaks in the chimney or furnace is to buy an inexpensive smoke candle from your local heating contractor. After lighting the candle, trap the smoke in the chimney by restricting the top of the chimney. However, do leave a small opening so the smoke will rise. Any smoke escaping through the masonry will indicate leaks you might not see otherwise. Make sure that the chimney is fixed before you start using the heater.

Natural and bottled gas heating systems should be checked by a service person to make sure that no water leaked into the controls or pressure regulator. You can remove the burner elements and clean them, but leave the electric controls and regulators to a service person. Replace severely soaked electric blower motors.

When the system is in good shape, have it okayed by a service person. Then restart the furnace to see if it works, keeping the heat low. If weather permits, turn the furnace off. High heat may dry the house out too fast and cause excessive warping in the floors and other parts of the building.

Finally, if your heating system uses ducts, don't forget about them. If they are at floor-level, you will definitely have lots of mud, silt and water in them. All this needs to be cleaned out and removed. As these ducts are normally insulated, the insulation must also be dried out or replaced. In most cases the amount of work involved is so huge that it is best to replace the entire duct set. If you are not going to replace them, remove them and clean them away from the house. This provides two key benefits: they are easier to clean and dry that way, and removing the ducts causes increased airflow, and thus an overall drying effect in and under the house. If there are ducts in the ceiling, the same should occur, even if they were not under water. Remember, the ducts must be well cleaned and dried to remove any possibility of mould formation.

Next time: more about cleaning up your home after the flood recedes.

Easy Solar Hot Water

by Nevin Sweeney, St Clair, NSW.

Hot water heating consumes up to 37 percent of home energy used, depending on who you read. An obvious way to cut that down is to install a solar hot water system, but what if your site is not satisfactory or you don't have the money? Even if you have solar, another energy source is required for cool and cloudy weather, and one of the things that bugs me is the water we waste while waiting for the water to run hot. This caused me to think about the situation based on other projects that I have completed and been able to share with you, thanks to the miracle of *Grass Roots*.

I used to do some work in China and I know that in some parts it is not possible to provide hot water on tap, so the residents buy hot water from a vendor and keep it hot in a Thermos or series of Thermos flasks. So the thought naturally came to me, why couldn't we use a solar oven such as the one I wrote about in GR 167?

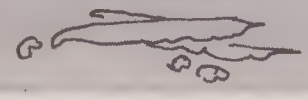
Last Christmas I was given a Thermos airpot, which is a pump-action insulated jug that allows you to pump out hot water as you need it. Taking the two-litre billy from the polystyrene insulated haybox (see GR 168), filling it with water and heating it in the solar oven gives me free, storable hot water. I am going to get a number of standard Thermos flasks, so that I can store the water as I heat it. The two-litre billy takes about three hours to come to the boil (January and February in Sydney), so I can heat and store a number of flasks in a day and they are efficient enough to keep the water hot enough overnight for a solar coffee or tea the next morning.

If you didn't have the Thermos, but could make a haybox insulated cooker, you could use that to keep the water hot overnight, and I have done that too, but you can't beat a Thermos of hot water in the kitchen for convenience (convenience = the system gets used). Okay, the system does not produce enough water to bath your kids, have a shower or put a load of clothes through, but it does produce enough for hot drinks, washing the dishes or washing your hands (when diluted with cold water of course!). These are the sort of jobs where only a small amount of water is used on a regular basis and you need to run it for a while, wasting water and energy, before it gets hot.

With a bit of work and perhaps already existing gear you too can have solar hot water and do your bit for self-sufficiency and the environment; every little helps.

BEAN THERE . . .

Before you unleash any legumes on your unsuspecting family, try soaking them before cooking. A pre-soak ensures they will be digestible and can be cooked in a reasonable time. Soak in containers in the fridge, so they don't spoil, then drain and store in the fridge or freezer, or cook straight away. Freezing actually has a tenderising effect. Soaked legumes keep for five to seven days in the fridge and several weeks in the freezer. And they'll be much more civilised on your insides.



Enjoying Life On A Budget

by Vicki Judd, Boronia, Vic.

Counting your pennies and finding it difficult? Vicki Judd shares her methods of staying sane and solvent with good quality of life.

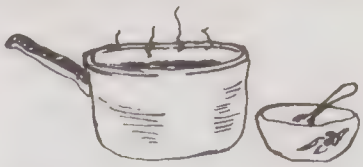
I've had to become something of an expert on the subject of budgets over the years, having learnt to survive, even live quite a comfortable existence, working low paid jobs or on Centrelink benefits.

I have organised direct debits to pay a little each fortnight to my gas, water and electricity bills. Centrelink pays my rent directly to the Housing Department before I even see the money (Centrelink can pay all bills if anyone wants them to), then they pay what's left into my bank account.

I also pay a small amount each fortnight to Chrisco Christmas Hampers and between mid November and mid December I get boxes of food delivered. I get a ham, two chickens, frozen and tinned vegies, tinned fruits, rice, pasta, coffee, sauces, boxes of chockies (great for gifts if they survive that long), a cake, mince pies, pudding, milk, cream, sugar and more, enough to last for months with some supplementation.

I list everything I spend money on in a bookkeeping journal. I record how much I get in, then what gets paid (rent, utility bills, savings account, other bills) and everything I spend money on – food, clothing, writing pads, envelopes, stamps, takeaway food, bread – anything at all I purchase. It's amazing how this makes me think about what I buy. The result has been less takeaway, less 'rubbish' and more healthy foods, and enough money for an occasional luxury like a meal at a restaurant on our birthdays.

I buy things on special or reduced for quick sale (a 320-litre chest freezer allows me to stock up cheaply) and use cheaper cuts of meat. In winter we eat a lot of soups with nice crusty rolls. This is very cheap, nutritious and delicious. All it takes is a couple of potatoes, onions, carrots, celery stalks or leaves, a turnip, a bit of tomato paste can be tossed in as well, and it's a great meal for vegans and



vegetarians or anyone else. Meat eaters can add stewing steak, chicken – boiling fowls are cheap and need long, slow simmering – or soup bones.

I use powdered skim milk for cooking and making homemade yoghurt, we drink it in coffee and have it on breakfast cereal as well. I only buy milk when we have visitors as skim milk in tea and coffee can be a bit strange if you're not used to it.

I make my own as much as possible. I regularly make yoghurt and I've just brewed up a batch of adults-only ginger beer – 25 bottles for around $11 is a bargain. I bake cakes, biscuits and muffins, make fresh pasta from eggs and flour, make ice cream and am on the lookout for a bread machine and a hand-operated ice cream churn. I've got a Fowlers Vacola bottling outfit, lots of jars, clips and rings, and a dehydrator as well, and I'm collecting glass-lidded preserving jars from op shops for pickled vegetables.

At the moment I don't have a vegie garden in, but I've got an olive tree, rosemary, garlic and sweet peas in pots, and am planning on putting in more herbs as well as grapes, passionfruit and some vegies. Then I'll be able to freeze or bottle any excess and make jams, jellies, pickles, herbal oils and vinegars to see us through the cold weather. Some tomato sauce, plum sauce and chilli sauce could go on the list as well.

None of my pots and pans match, and all of them, with the exception of my wok, came from op shops, but they all do a great job and that's what counts. We get nearly all our sheets, towels, quilts, pillowcases, furniture and every imaginable item from op shops. I love scouring them for bargains and always find plenty, even craft supplies that I can turn into some dazzling creations. The wok I mentioned earlier I bought new, and it helps produce low-cost, highly nutritious meals, so was worth the $17 I paid for it. I found the bamboo steamers for $1 at an op shop, though am on the lookout for a lid for the wok now, as it didn't come with one.

I knit and crochet, darn socks, decorate lidded seagrass baskets and papier-mâché boxes, do some decoupage and mosaics, make wreaths,

knit toys and make paper by recycling junk mail as well. I started back at a market again in September after an 18 month break. The market I used to go to closed down due to too few customers; we didn't get enough money to cover the $12 stall rental. I hope the new market, on the first Saturday of each month in the carpark at the East Ringwood railway station, will help me make a bit of extra money for expenses and my savings plan. Don't forget to inform Centrelink of any monies earned! Better safe than sorry.

My savings plan is simple. I decided on a minimum amount each week to go into a savings account, which has higher interest when the balance is $500 or more. Once I had enough I transferred a large proportion of the balance into a term deposit, which has even higher interest, and continued paying each week into the other account, which has now built up to a fairly good sized balance again. I frequently add more than the set minimum to the account, but

never less. I also throw all my silver coins into a container and have banked around $300 – $400 in the last 18 months. The savings account is listed as a bill in my budget and so must be paid each fortnight. The reason for my saving is, of course, to accumulate enough for a deposit on a piece of paradise. I'm proud to say that in the last 18 months I've managed to get to the point where I'm on the lookout for an inexpensive place on vendor terms!

Getting clothes dry in winter is a chore and I use the heater as much as I can rather than the dryer. If I need the heater on to keep warm, I might as well get my money's worth out of it, even if the house looks untidy with clothes hanging everywhere. I use energy efficient light bulbs and so far they've lasted over a year and the electricity bill has been lower, not to mention I haven't had to be constantly buying light globes.

Another investment I made that has paid for itself is a Soda Stream machine. I bought it on sale for $47, which was $10 off the regular price. Included was the machine, the gas, four bottles and four flavourings. The resulting drinks have less sugar and other nasties than the drinks from the shops. I'd rather the boys didn't drink soft drinks at all, but at ages 16, 18 and 20 they are old enough to make up their own minds; at least this way we save some money.

There are still some other skills I'd like to try eventually – soap making, wine making (beer is easy, not so sure about wine) and all sorts of crafts, but there are only so many hours in a day. I might have to look at time management so I can fit more in!

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Better Than A Bay Leaf

by Ken Moore, Glamorgan Vale, Qld.

The lemon myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) is an attractive Queensland rainforest tree, growing from Brisbane to Mackay. In the natural state, it grows to about 12 metres, but will grow three to eight metres in a garden. In summer its clusters of white flowers attract myriad insects. It grows in a wide variety of soils; mine grows on heavy clay. It should grow in most coastal areas of mainland Australia, where it can get moisture and some protection from strong winds and heavy frost. It can be a bit slow to establish; mine is one and a half metres tall after three years. It is best grown from cuttings or layering, as seeds are unreliable. It will take pruning.

As the name suggests, its leaves have a strong citrus scent. Because it has a wide (and growing) number of uses, commercial plantations have been established in northern NSW and southern Queensland.

Ken with a healthy young bush in the garden.

Lemon myrtle grows readily in a pot.

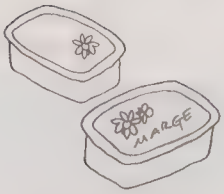
USES

The leaves can be used, fresh or dried, in any cooking where bay leaves are conventionally used. I love the chopped fresh leaf in meat dishes, soups, casseroles, curries and stews. Freshly chopped leaf also adds spice to a salad. It can be used as flavouring in bread, scones, cakes and dessert. Leaves can be infused as a tea. Dried leaves can be used in potpourri and room freshener. It also has potential as a potted plant and a cut native flower.

Its main commercial attraction probably lies in distillation of its citral oil content. The oil's strong antifungal and antibacterial properties make it suitable for use in cosmetic, aromatic, cleaning and pharmaceutical products.

Lemon myrtle is a versatile native!

RECYCLING RUNS RIOT



Handy Plastic Containers

by Roberino, Arrawarra Beach, NSW.

Plastic resealable containers come in many shapes and sizes and are a valuable resource for numerous applications in the home and workshop. As most of these containers are packaging they are throwaway items, which would normally end up as landfill. Do yourself and the environment a favour by reusing as many of them as you can. Who knows, you might even be able to organise your daily chaos.

FILM CONTAINERS

These once ubiquitous little gems are harder to find now digital photography has largely supplanted 35-millimetre film. If you have access to the little tubes film comes in, about three centimetres diameter and five centimetres long, with a tight snap-on lid, you'll find them invaluable for storing all manner of tiny items. I like the clear plastic ones so I can see what is inside, but the black ones are best for storing items that might degrade with light.

Fisherpersons find them ideal for carrying hooks, sinkers, swivels and even fish oil for attracting fish. Craftspeople use them for pins, beads, buttons, erasers and small amounts of paints, inks, stains and dyes. Woodworkers and hobbyists store small nuts and bolts, screws, razor blades, scalpel blades, paints, stains, brads, tacks and staples in them. For anyone on holidays they make handy hides for banknotes, aspirins and other small first-aid items.

TAKEAWAY FOOD CONTAINERS

If you don't eat fast foods and save the handy containers, they are so useful they're worth buying from specialist plastics retailers listed in the phone book. The size I find most useful is 17 x 12 x 5 centimetres in clear polypropylene. I usually buy them in packs of 50.

These must be one of the cheapest ever food storage products. Being stackable and rectangular, they are quite space saving on shelves in the pantry, fridge or freezer. They are good to use too in the car fridge for picnics or holidays. I don't trust them for use in the microwave, even when the label on the containers says they are all right for this use.

Before use, I always rinse the containers as I don't know their intimate histories before they arrived at my place. Labelling is of top priority: masking tape written on with a laundry marker is quick and easy. If storing perishable food, a date of containment is wise to prevent food poisoning.

I'm now quite organised, compared to how I used to be! The time I save is quite amazing. Bathroom shelves have been tidied up dramatically and razor blades and pills are now reasonably childproof, or at least out of sight.

Of course, I use them for their original purpose of food storage too. I save a lot of time and energy by cooking more than I need and freezing the excess, with the date clearly marked. Spices, grains and rarely used condiments can be packed in containers and stored in the fridge away from weevils. They last longer and stay fresher and this is another way of saving money by preventing spoilage. Biscuits transferred from their cellophane wrapper to a sealed plastic storage container will not go stale so quickly.

When travelling, you can put your toothpaste and other toiletries in these containers to prevent spillage onto clothing.

Opened pet food can be transferred from the tin to a plastic container to prevent it from becoming tainted through reacting with the metal. Animals have infinitely more sensitive senses of smell than humans and tainted food must be truly atrocious for some of them. This will also prevent smelly pet food from affecting the humans' food in the fridge.

Pets' medications, well labelled, can be stored in them so they are not mistakenly used for humans. Documents for pets can be stored in a separate container nearby so they are not misplaced.

You can keep small spare parts such as light globes and fuses in the boot of the car, within reused foam packaging to prevent breakages. Use one as a small first-aid kit in the glove box to store wound dressings, tweezers, eucalyptus and tea tree oil and analgesics for sudden headaches. Another one can hold a few packets of pacifiers such as chewing gum to reduce the 'are we there yets' and soothe stressed drivers.

MARGARINE CONTAINERS

You always knew those containers that held margarine and similar spreads would be handy.

To make a cockroach trap, cut a small slot, about 20 x 5 millimetres, in the lid of a container. Pour some beer dregs into the base and put the lid back on. Place a few around food storage areas where cockies have been seen. Check every few days. Good hunting.

To store nails, screws, nuts and bolts and any other small metal objects that tend to rust, do not wash the container when it is empty. Place objects in the container, seal and shake contents. The small amount of margarine left will coat the items and prevent rusting. It will also make driving the nails so treated into timber easier.

These containers do a good job of storing small quantities of leftovers and pet food in the fridge. Remember to label clearly.

Green Learning

by Lisa Zwager, Wangaratta South, Vic.

Students from a small country school in Glenrowan are in the midst of setting up their own little patch of heaven after they became involved in Learnscape, an environmental awareness program.

Using organic practices the students are growing vegetables such as broad beans, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, rainbow silverbeet, rhubarb and spinach in their kitchen garden. The grade six students are involved in a spinach growing competition. The girls have planted spinach seeds in a glasshouse and the boys have planted spinach seedlings. The race is on to see which plants reach maturity first. In order to beat their opponents each team has researched the ideal conditions for growing spinach. The students have discussed altering the nitrogen level and methods of deterring snails. They are also downloading many recipes in anticipation of a booming harvest.

In their organic garden the students also have a 'pizza herb garden' where they grow garlic chives, lemon thyme, oregano, parsley and rosemary. Part of the environmental awareness program is teaching children to appreciate fresh food and understand nutrition.

Last year the school requested each of the 100 students make a gold coin donation for the purchase of fruit trees. The individual year levels had the final choice on the type of fruit tree to be planted in the new orchard. Now the school has an orange, a mandarin and a mulberry tree, a pineapple feijoa and peach and pear trees. A school family also donated an olive tree.

Top: Samantha Jarred and Samantha McNamara holding Jet and Turbo.
Above: Isabel Williams and Chloe Powell planting Chinese snow peas.

The students are often found playing at their patch of heaven, with the chickens and ducks being a popular attraction. The aim of Learnscape is to set up many areas within the school yard as outdoor classrooms where the children can to go to learn in a structured way or through play.

The Learnscape program teaches the students about good health and interpersonal skills as well as crossing over into other areas of the curriculum such as science, biology and mathematics. The idea is to engage the students so they don't realise they are learning. This is also known as 'real learning', when the tasks are related to an actual outcome such as researching spinach growing.

The school's staff are currently looking at other school models for ideas to incorporate into their small school. They are particularly impressed by Collingwood College's organic kitchen garden and think it would be nice to have a similar set-up in Glenrowan, but on a smaller scale.

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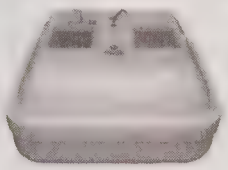

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WHAT'S ON

NEW MARKET TIMES
Veg Out St Kilda Farmers' Market is changing its date to the first Saturday of every month, in order to accommodate Gasworks Arts Park's new farmers' market, which will be on the third Saturday of each month from 21 January, at 21 Graham St, Albert Park. Contact Miranda Sharp for details, 0429-146-627.

CLEAN UP YOUR AREA
This year, Clean Up Australia Day will be held on Sunday 5 March. It's a great opportunity to make a difference to the environment and have a sausage or vegie burger sizzle with family and friends at the same time. Last year, volunteers cleaned up an estimated 8450 tonnes of rubbish, not bad eh? To register a cleanup site or find a site in your local area, visit www.cleanup.com.au or call 1800-282-329.

SPIN A YARN
SA spinning sorts might enjoy a mohair spinning workshop on 18 February, or, if you are more a luxury type, try silk spinning on 18 March. For more details, contact convenor Helen Vonow at the Handspinners and Weavers Guild of SA, ph: 08-8346-3525, email: spinweavesa@hotmail.com

DUSTY DASH
St Arnaud in Western Victoria is holding a 'Dash in the Dust' weekend on 17 to 18 March, with Quarter horse racing and many festivities. If you love horses, check it out, ph: 03-5495-2441.

SEYMOUR EXPO
This year's Seymour Alternative Farming Expo will be held on 17 to 19 February at Kings Park, Seymour, one hour north of Melbourne. It's often a hot weekend, so take a hat and the sunscreen as you wander around the building, equipment and plant stalls and home, farm and animal displays. There'll be plenty of food and entertainment as well. Ph: 03-5799-1211 or go to www.seymour-expo.com

ENJOY THE GOOD LIFE
If you're in WA, you might like to pop in to the Goodlife Health, Harmony and Wellbeing Exhibition, on 24 to 26 March, at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre. You'll find feature areas devoted to health, relaxation, natural therapies, good food, nutrition and more. Go to www.thegoodlife.com.au

WANT A WALK?
Walk Against Want turns 40 this year. Celebrate by turning out and taking steps against poverty. It's on 5 March in Victoria, Tasmania and SA, and 12 March in other states. Go to www.oxfam.org.au/walk for details.

SUSTAINABLE LIVING FESTIVAL
Check out the Sustainable Living Festival, in the heart of Melbourne at Federation Square, on 17 to 19 February. As well as stalls and displays, there'll be talks on organic and slow food, energy alternatives, strawbale building and more. For more information, go to www.slf.org.au/festival

STUDENTS IN STYLE
Want to see what the kids are doing these days? Texstyle 2005 is a display of the best textile projects from the 2005 Higher School Certificate textiles and design course, and is on in the stables of Vaucluse House until 10 March. There will also be rare textile items on display in the house. Visit Vaucluse House, Wentworth Rd, Vaucluse NSW or ph: 02-9388-7922.

MURRAY TO MIKE
Join Greenpeace for one leg or all of a leisurely five-day walk from the Murray River to Premier Mike Rann's Adelaide office, while calling on SA's political parties to reduce the state's greenhouse pollution and set a clean energy target of 25 percent by 2020. The walk leaves from Goolwa on 8 February. Contact 08-8223-5155 or www.greenpeace.org.au

MOORA MOORA REMINDER
Don't forget the Mt Toolebewong Festival is on Saturday 25 February, from 11am till late. Go to Healesville via Maroondah Hwy, turn right into Don Rd and follow the signs. No dogs, cats, drugs or alcohol. For more info contact Bindi Woodland, ph: 03-5962-4104. Website: www.mooramoora.org

HIGHLANDS ARTS EXPERIENCE
For some culture in the country, visit Highlands Arts Experience and enjoy great art, food and activities. On 4 to 5 March, for more details see website: www.highlandsarts.org.au

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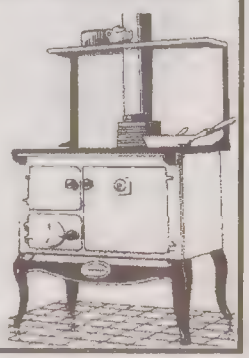


ROUND THE MARKET PLACE

We hope you enjoy this feature introducing new products relevant to readers' lifestyles and interests.

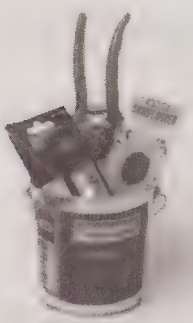
ENVIROSAFE PAINTS

The Australian Environmental Labelling Association Inc has recently accredited two paint manufacturers as meeting the requirements of the 'Good Environmental Choice' Australia Program. The accreditation was given to selected paints in the Solver Enviroguard range and the Bauwerk Colour P/L range. Paints, lacquers and varnishes normally contain carcinogenic and other toxic ingredients. The accreditation is given to products that use safer alternative ingredients or substances at levels not considered hazardous. The product must also perform as well as or better than conventional ones and have significantly less impact on the environment. Solver paints are made in Australia for Australian conditions. All Bauwerk products are mineral based and the company specialises in lime-based paints, what's more, the range is transported and sold in recyclable plastic packaging. Look for the Environmental Choice Australia logo, with the tick, when choosing paint products.

For more information about the AELA visit: www.aela.org.au or email: management@aela.org.au
To contact Solver Paints ph: 08-8368-1209, visit: www.solverpaints.com.au or email: johnlakatos@solverpaints.com.au
To contact Bauwerk Colour P/L ph: 08-9433-1008, visit: www.bauwerk.com.au or email: info@bauwerk.com.au

ELASTOPLAST SPRAY BANDAGE

Any gardener or handyperson knows how awkward it can be to get on with the job while hand injuries are covered in ordinary wound dressings that need to be kept dry and clean to promote healing. Elastoplast Spray Bandage provides a transparent protective barrier that prevents exposure to water, dirt and bacteria and allows cuts, scratches and grazes to heal safely. It's thin, flexible and breathable, dries in seconds, and is claimed to promote faster healing and less scarring. Elastoplast Spray Bandage is available from supermarkets, pharmacies and variety stores in a 30-gram aerosol spray that retails for $11.90. Each can is said to give 40 applications.



For more information about this and other Elastoplast products visit: www.elastoplast.com.au

BEDTIME BUDDY

There's new hope available for children, and parents, with bed-wetting and sleep problems. BioLogic Health Solutions has released Bedtime Buddy, a herbal cream to apply to the chest, abdomen or feet to settle children between the ages of 3 and 12 with sleep difficulties and combat bed-wetting. It contains essential oils of lavender and Roman chamomile for relaxation, lime and rose geranium for a healthy nervous system and myrrh and cypress to improve bladder tone and control. Bedtime Buddy has a pleasant, fresh aroma that is not overpowering. It is available from selected pharmacies and health food stores, or can be ordered by mail. The recommended cost is $20.65 for a 50-gram tube and $3.80 for postage.

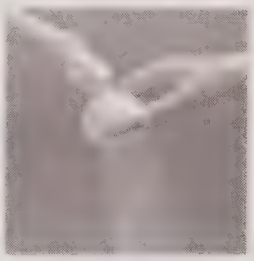
To find out more about this and other BioLogic products ph: 1300-130-203, or visit: www.biologichealth.net

GREASE MONKEY

This new product from OzKleen, makers of Shower Power, has been specially formulated to cope with greasy cleaning jobs such as stoves, barbecues, microwave ovens and rangehood filters. Grease Monkey is effective and easy to use and contains the same citrus extracts found in Shower Power. What it does not contain is ammonia, caustic soda or bleach, making it safe to use on food preparation surfaces and in septic systems. Built-up grease on cooking appliances can be a fire hazard and this easy-to-use remedy can reduce the likelihood of kitchen flare-ups. The company is 100 percent Australian owned and all products are formulated, manufactured and bottled in Australia. It is available wherever cleaning products are found.

For more information contact Colin Heron on 07-5549-4777.

TILT'N SAVE SHOWER HEAD



The Tilt'n Save Shower Head has a design feature that allows users to reduce the flow from a low 9.5 litres per minute to an even lower 2.5 litres by simply tilting the head down. There are no shut-off buttons or awkward controls to adjust with slippery fingers. The water temperature remains the same. The feature is ideal to use while shampooing and conditioning hair and quickly returns to full flow when it's time to rinse. It's easy to install and no special tools are needed. The Tilt'n Save Shower Head is available at most hardware stores for a recommended price of $8.95.

To find your nearest stockist contact Handi Home Supplies, ph: 03-9466-1611. Email: handihome@ozemail.com.au

RECENT RELEASES

Titles described can be ordered through your nearest bookstore.

CHANGE THE WORLD FOR 10 BUCKS
50 Actions to Change the World and Make You Feel Great

For those in the mood to improve the world, but lacking inspiration, it's all here, and on the cheap. The actions in this book are as simple and varied as donating your old specs to a developing country, mowing your neighbour's lawn or buying fairly traded coffee. For 10 bucks it's a light, cheery and delightfully illustrated book, and yet may just inspire some genuine improvements in our world.

P/b, 110pp, Pilotlight Australia with Hardie Grant Publishing, 85 High St, Prahran 3181. Ph: 0410-535-977. RRP: $10.00.

COMMUNITY GARDENS
A Celebration of the People, Recipes and Plants
Penny Woodward and Pam Vardy

If you are anything like RR, every time you walk past a community garden you have a good sticky over the fence and wonder who actually does the gardening. Here's the answer! Community gardeners from widely differing backgrounds and nationalities share their amazing and uplifting life stories, as well as gardening tips and favourite recipes. There's also a section containing profiles on 90 useful plants.

P/b, 166pp, Hyland House, PO Box 122, Flemington 3031. Ph: 03-9376-4461. RRP: $28.00.

NUT GROWER'S GUIDE
The Complete Handbook for Producers and Hobbyists
Jennifer Wilkinson

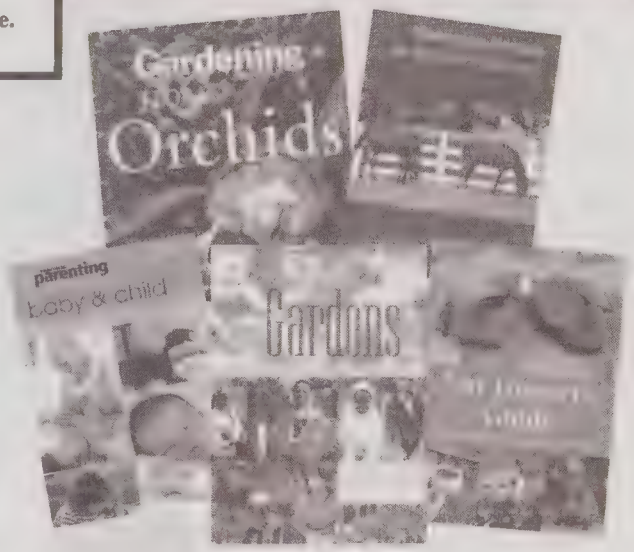
Whether for one almond tree in the backyard, a small orchard on the farm, or those considering starting a commercial operation, this book will be useful. First, it discusses which nut grows where, propagation, planting and managing an orchard, and key factors for success in business. Then, each individual nut variety is profiled, covering background, specific requirements, pollination, orchard layout, cultivars, management, pests and diseases, and harvesting. Organic production is discussed and organic remedies recommended.

P/b, 240pp, Landlinks Press, PO Box 1139, Collingwood 3066. Ph: 03-9662-7500. RRP: $59.95.

MANAGING HORSES ON SMALL PROPERTIES
Jane Myers

Imagine a few horses galloping gloriously around the back paddock. Too dear? Happy news; good, sustainable property management can be combined with horse keeping and does not need to be an expensive undertaking or detrimental to the land and wildlife. Myers suggests that improved pasture means less feed bills, reduced mud and dust improves a horse's health and reduces vet bills, and better manure management turns a liability into an asset. The book covers general horse care and management as well as property maintenance.

P/b, 224pp, Landlinks Press, PO Box 1139, Collingwood 3066. Ph: 03-9662-7500. RRP: $49.95.



PICTURE YOUR WORLD IN APPLIQUÉ
Creating Unique Images With Fabric
Margaret Cusack

Those with spare scraps of fabric at home read on, as the artistic creations that can be made with appliqué will blow the mind. As well as some nice farm-style pictures, there are patterns here for quilts, cushions, family trees, and even how to reproduce a photograph or a still life. This book would be best for experienced sewers, and be warned, some designs are very American, but all are beautiful and inspiring.

P/b, 128pp, Watson-Guptill, c/- Bookwise International, 174 Cormack Rd, Wingfield 5013. Ph: 08-8268-8222. RRP: $39.95.

FLORA'S ORCHIDS
David P Banks

Did you know orchids are found naturally on all continents except Antarctica? How about that orchids belong to the largest plant family? This massive tome contains more than 1500 entries, surely making it the orchid bible. Format follows the style of the other books in the ABC's Flora series, with a few introductory chapters on classification, cultivation, propagation and diseases and so on, then an illustrated A to Z of species and hybrids. Orchid enthusiasts will love it.

H/b, 368pp, ABC Books, GPO Box 9994, Sydney 2001. Ph: 1300-360-111. RRP: $75.00.

PRACTICAL PARENTING: BABY AND CHILD
All Your Questions Answered

The pregnant one in the office snatched up this book immediately and informs RR that it covers the first four year's of bub's life, and is aimed at answering common questions such as: why does he do so and so, is this normal and how do I get her to . . . It's broad and easy to follow, so should save unnecessary trips to the doctor and provide new parents with a good general guide to caring for kids and bubs.

P/b, 192pp, Hamlyn, c/- Bookwise International, 174 Cormack Rd, Wingfield 5013. Ph: 08-8268-8222. RRP: $32.95.

DOWN HOME ON THE FARM

by Suni Miller.

I've often wondered if you can make a country person out of a city one and vice versa, or whether you just create a new and quirk-ridden hybrid. Marcel and I have a city pad with a courtyard, and the notorious renovator's delight in the country. When we're not surrounded by land, I do love getting my hands dirty in our tiny city vegie patch and potted garden, which I think is pretty normal. Marcel, on the other hand, is a city boy who has taken to part-time country living with increasing gusto. But I've noticed he has now started to manifest his new skills in the city as well, and in some really odd ways.

Marcel's water-saving enthusiasm is already well known to GR. He's the only person I know who has to get up in the middle of the night in a rainstorm to empty the drip buckets onto various plants, just because they are full. No matter that every centimetre of ground is under water anyway. This relationship with water is a troubled one, however; he has also left the hose running for days, left the tank tap open and drained the tank and, most recently, jaunted off to a christening party leaving the hose on at the tap. While we were enjoying ourselves in a friend's sunny backyard, the pressure at home grew and grew. We returned, slightly befuddled, to find the hose had exploded in our absence, turning our backyard into the Trevi Fountain. Not what you want in a drought. So although I was sceptical to begin with, we've come to agree that Marcel's water-saving measures are in fact necessary to keep us on the positive side of the ecological balance.

Actually, sometimes they are downright handy. Marcel always leaves the water in the bath to cool down, then buckets it onto the plants. Recently, we both took turns to have our Saturday morning bath (somehow I always get second turn), then Marcel went off to do a photography job. I decided a walk was in order, and it wasn't until I was a fair distance from home that I realised how hot it had become. By the time I staggered back, it must have been near 40 degrees and I was steaming. How to cool down? Well there was the lovely cool bath water and I can tell you, my second bath for the day was most reviving. I told Marcel when he got home that it had been so hot I'd had to get back in the bath and he nearly fainted. 'The bath? That's disgusting!' he said in horror. 'How could you? It's for the plants, not you.' I don't know why cooling the water sent it beyond the reach of human decency, but there you go; he obviously didn't grow up on a farm where the whole family bathed in a few precious centimetres. In future, I'll take care not to divulge when I'm sneaking extra baths out of the plants' water.

I'm sure my doubly enriched bath water has benefited the vegies. This year we have snow peas and zucchini growing well in pots, the usual range of herbs, and tomatoes, capsicums and silverbeet in the little garden patch. I used to grow my vegies in the country, where there was three-quarters of an acre of land, but that was in the days when it still rained over summer. A long car trip after work three times a week to water has lost its appeal, so I've had to downsize. My basis for space allocation is to only choose plants that grow multiple leaves, fruits or vegies on the same bush, hence carrots are out and peas are in. To be honest, I'm not that keen on silverbeet, but it's so prolific and easy to grow that I feel compelled to plant it, then have to make a lot of quiche and minestrone to use the damn thing up. It always grows better than everything else and, unfortunately, it's not as versatile as, say, a glut of zucchinis, but we're compelled to eat every leaf because we grew it. Despite last year's sworn promise, I always decide to grow it again because, well, it's so prolific. This summer, I've decided to palm it all off to Megg. She hasn't twigged yet, and I feel like a vegie gangster, paying her off for various favours with bags of the green stuff each week.

My next goal is to find room for a worm farm, ventures into which, I regret to say, have been so wildly unsuccessful in the past that Marcel banned them for a time. Still, I'm in my 30s now, surely I can make one work? Others have done it. And using enriched soil in my pots rather than certain leftover finings would be lovely.

A few years ago two good mates helped us build a timber deck over part of our dampish courtyard, so we could enjoy it in winter without wading through a mud swamp. A fair amount of dirt was dug up to accommodate this construction, and this was temporarily removed to the narrow lane between our house and the fence. 'Why don't we get someone to come and get rid of it?' I asked at the time.

'No way. You can put it in pots or

we'll just take it to the country and fill in holes with it. It's too useful to give away', Marcel said.

Did I mention this was two years ago? The mound of dirt settled, grew grass, became part of the landscape. We could check out our neighbour's garden without having to crane over the fence, and the cats thought it was a great playground.

Since then, every weekend before we go to the country, Marcel has gone out to do his digging. He'd half-fill three wheat bags with dirt (so we could carry them), cart it down to the bush, and strew it artistically somewhere on our block. If it looked like raining on the weekend he'd have to get out there a few days early, because a trip without dirt was a wasted opportunity. For a long time this nibbling away at the dirt pile did not seem to be getting anywhere, but I'm pleased to say we are nearly at the end of it, and have even been entertaining ideas of landscaping the area.

I went out there the other day after he'd been gone a particularly long time to find him on his haunches, deep in concentration, doing something odd.

'What are you doing?'

'Just sifting the dirt.'

'What?' Is this why it had taken us so long? He was sifting every bagful. I looked around me. Sure enough, every spare plastic pot I'd stacked neatly away for future use was now full of white stones. At least 20 or more of them had sprung up without my noticing. It looked like an installation, or some demented collection. 'What the . . . ?'

'Well, those stones were under all the dirt originally, remember, and when it's all gone, I can reuse them so the weeds don't take over the path.' He frowned. 'What did you think I was saving them for?'

'I don't know – art?' I said.

Marcel went white. 'Have you been telling GR readers that I'm sifting dirt and storing stones for no known purpose?' He thought for a minute. 'Well, won't you look like a dill when they find out you're mistaken and I'm actually being useful and recycling', he finished triumphantly.

'Hmmm, not as silly as you'll look all the meantime', I countered, and backed out of there quickly, making sure not to knock any stones over.

I really thought that was taking it to the limit, but when he came in, he said, 'You know, now that I'm nearly finished all this digging and sorting, I don't know what I'll do with my spare time. I'm going to need a new hobby'. Yes, he was joking, but he did sound a little wistful. Is this what happens when the country finally takes over the city in a man? Or is it just a latent quirk? Either way, I'm sure I can think of something else to keep him busy. Stopping the goose grass at Avers from completely pulling the fence down perhaps?

Christmas was a lovely break from work, and digging, and this year it had extra meaning. My dear friend from boarding school had her baby on Christmas Eve, so the highlight of our day was dropping in and seeing a real Christmas bub. Naturally, Amanda and Richard called him Nicholas, and his timely arrival gave the carols and crib an extra dollop of relevance. Despite this added excitement, we were able to pull ourselves away to have a relaxed day with Marcie's family, then enjoyed Boxing Day celebrations at home with Megg, David, his partner Sylke, her son, and his mate – a true Australian extended family gathering. We each brought part of the meal and ate so much for lunch, in good holiday style, that all we could do for the rest of the afternoon was sit back and watch the cricket and secretly snooze; all except Marcel, who loves the cricket and was torn between being devastated that the rest of us snored through such a good match, and being overjoyed that we actually had it on in the first place.

We normally spend the whole week after Chrissie in the country, but not even the prospect of uninterrupted cricket on the ABC radio could convince us to stay more than two days, it was so hot this year. It was not the weather for getting a year's accumulated jobs done, that's certain, and if we've started behind, heavens knows where we'll end. It has cooled down, marginally, and Marcel's out there with the whippersnipper right now, so I really shouldn't complain about his hybrid city-country quirks, stone sifting, recycling and all. I'm quite looking forward to my new path of reclaimed stones – much nicer than a dirt pile. And after all, he's working much harder than me. Or is it just that he gets to listen to the cricket while he does it?

PENPALS

Restless man, 60, into solitude, stillness, quiet, writing, insights, deep reflection, meditation, Tao. Have need to communicate with persons with similar leanings.

Michael O'Brien,
2/119 Brassey St,
MARYBOROUGH 3645.

Hi, my name is Dawn, I'm 10 years old and I like reading, books (most types), dolphins and most animals, making things and doing craft. I also like playing games outside or inside. I am home-schooled and I am a vegetarian and I would like to write to girls aged 9 to 12 years.

Dawn (GR 173)
C/- PO Box 117, SEYMOUR 3661.

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HOW TO ADVERTISE

- Use form provided below, or a separate sheet of paper.
- Print ad clearly, **not in block capitals**, with correct punctuation.
- If more than one ad please print each one on a separate page.
- Remember to include an address or phone number in your ad.
- Count number of words and multiply by 85 cents per word (phone number counted as one word) to work out total cost. Add $15 for photo.
- Send **with payment** to Grass Roots, PO Box 117, Seymour 3661, before the deadline and we'll include your ad in the next issue.

Deadline for GR 174 is 28 February, 2006. Please do not fax ads.

Sender's Name ..... For issues no/s .....

Address ..... Classification .....

..... Postcode ..... Cost of ad .....

Cost for advertisements is 85c per word

PROPERTY FOR SALE

NEW SOUTH WALES

ATTENTION BIRDWATCHERS, NATURE LOVERS: Lovely 14.5 sq log home in peaceful bush setting only 7 km to Tamworth centre, 5 km hospital. Open design, windows & verandahs all around. Country kitchen, gas stove & HW system. Two b/rs with BIR. Gas & wood heaters, extensive solar power, Suntracker 5 KVA back-up generator, 100,000 lt r/water, 5000 lt header, elec pump. Two iron sheds, c/port, open shed, shadehouse. Native garden, 150 ac unspoiled bushland, abundant fauna, flora. $375,000. Ph: 02-6766-5426.

NARRABRI: PRIVATE SALE, Garden of Eden (freehold) for $800,000. A magnif 900 sq m homestead, 12 rooms, 3 bathrooms, 2 kitchens, storeroom/pantry, cool room. Set in 1750 ac (708.22 ha) of secluded virgin native forest, endowed with original flora & fauna. Also connected to satellite broadband. This is a once-in-a-lifetime development opportunity, ideal for permaculture, community, health retreat, B & B, wilderness camping & more. This secluded estate at the edge of Pilliga State Forest near Wee Waa has perm crk & unlimited drinking water bore, estab poultry run, screened vegie garden of sandy loam. Pictures & details on application by email to: irene721@portmac.com or ph: 02-6796-2204.

COPMANHURST, 25 MINUTES GRAFTON, 80 ac, approx ⅓ cleared, 4 b/r mudbrick/timber home + self-cont accom, water tanks, town water avail, 3 dams, vegie garden, f/trees, very private. Power, mail, school bus. $335,000. Ph: 02-6647-3262. More info: www.noagentproperty.com.au, ID: waterlily.

BUNGAWALBYN, NORTHERN RIVERS: 40.09 ha, whole property certified organic, 8 ha tea tree production with plant & equipment incl in sale, which incl David Brown 990, slasher, Iseki tractor, forage harvester, bin/distillery tank for tea tree oil harvesting. House is comfortable single-storey brick veneer with solar elec, tank water, septic, ph. Peace & quiet & school bus past front gate. The remainder of the land comprises natural bush tea tree & other trees. The natural bush tea tree is also in big demand & is income-producing. The asking price is $250,000. Ph: 02-6661-9122.

WILLOW SPRINGS situated 4 km from Wyndham, 25 km to Merimbula, 2 hrs to snowfields. Hundred-acre Thoroughbred stud with superior fencing, perm crk with troughs to all paddocks. Ten yr old 20 sq brick home, 4 b/r with en suite, workshop/studio, too many extras to list. $650,000. Ph: 02-6494-2455.

All ads on these pages are accepted at the discretion of the publishers.

TASMANIA

ARTHUR RIVER – ON THE 'WILD WEST COAST' of Tas: 3 b/r fully furnished shack, lge garage. Wonderful beaches & river. A fishing & 4WD paradise. $198,000. More info ph Dawn, 03-6458-3194.

CAMPBELL TOWN, HOUSE BLOCK, fully serviced & fenced, 2 mins to hospital & shops. $24,000 ONO. Ph: 03-6381-1610.

VICTORIA

MACEDON RANGES, NEWHAM, lge comfortable well-maintained cottage on 4.75 ac, nth facing views to Cobaw Ranges, 3 b/rs, 2 bath, solar HW. Totally organic property, some greywater recycle, chooks, vegies, orchard, nuts, big dam, 3 tanks, bore, sheds with power, aircon, gas, electric, solid fuel heating. Five mins to forest, 15 mins to town, 1 hr Melbourne, school bus at door. Easy-care drought-tolerant garden. $435,000. Ph: Sally, 03-5427-0059.

QUEENSLAND

MILLMERRAN: 20 ACRES lightly timbered, pine & oak, 25 mins from town. Adjoining Gore Hwy, school bus, lge Zincalume shed made into 2 b/r home with 10 ft wide verandahs on 2 sides. Other outbuildings, r/water tanks & lge dam always full. $160,000. Ph: 0427-878-770.

GRASSIFIEDS

PROPERTY FOR SALE

QUEENSLAND

SELF-SUFFICIENCY – 20 ACRES, solar power, spring water (see article GR 168), steam engine – back-up power, organic market garden, f/trees, timber, 2 dams, house pads, ocean views or valley, secluded, halfway between Gold Coast & Brisbane, 2 b/r 10 x 8 m cottage. Lack of funds to complete projects – damn! Can you finish my dream? Would suit young, energetic & enthusiastic alternative lifestyler. $500,000. Ph: 0427-112-014. Listed: www.harcourts.com.au

HOUSE BUILT TO LOCK-UP on 1 ac f/hold block at Kookaburra Park Eco-Village. An opportunity exists for a handyperson to get into this estab eco-village a short drive from Bundaberg in Qld. This 3 b/r home is built to lock-up stage & only requires finishing off. $135k. Only a few vacant blocks left, $55k each. Call Natasha on 07-4153-1303 for more details. Website: www.kp.eco-village.com.au

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

FORTY ACRES ON MT REMARKABLE near Melrose, SA, surrounded by nat pk. Full brick home, 3 dble b/rs, 2 bath (en suite), lge lounge, dining, modern kitchen, r/c aircon, combustion stove, wooden ceilings, carpets & tiles throughout. Power, ph, mains water, organic vegie garden, f/trees, 100 olive trees, dble garage, workshop, return paved verandah, good views, fully fenced, 2-room cabin, sheds, tanks, tractor, truck, ride-on mower, pumps & more. $398,000. Ph: 08-8666-2192.

Mt Remarkable

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

WORK FROM HOME: Risk-free mail order, part or f/time, low set-up cost, free info. Ph: 08-9537-7271.

BUSINESS FOR SALE

CUSTOM FRAMING AND GALLERY BUSINESS, MELTON: In operation 12 years, loyal customer base, owner will provide training as required. $35,000 + SAV. Ph: Brian, 03-9747-6377.

DEADLINES: GR 174 – 28 FEBRUARY
GR 175 – 27 APRIL

OPPORTUNITIES

DOES YOUR PROPERTY LEND ITSELF TO TOURISM or dairying? My exotic animals & myself are looking for a home, a business, a lifestyle, a love. Presently working in management, within an award-winning tourism facility. If you can help or I can help you, please, let's talk. Ph: 0402-520-411. Email: camelman44@hotmail.com

FOR RENT/CARETAKER WANTED

WANTED, CARETAKING COUPLE at Maryfarms nth Qld on organic farm, April to June 2006. Ph: 07-4094-3182.

WANTED TO RENT/ CARETAKE

HOUSE SITTERS! Need one? Want to be one? Then come & visit 'Aussie House Sitters': www.aussiehousesitters.com.au

CARETAKER/GARDENER: Honest & mature-minded person wanted to caretake (garden, maintenance) sml property (2.5 ac) near Gatton in Qld, p/time, 4 days p/w in exchange for free accom (nice 2 b/r cottage). Genuine experience required in gardening, permaculture & general maintenance. Prefer n/s, reference required. Great lifestyle, clean peaceful environment, 1 hr to Brisbane. Ph: 0407-954-983 or 07-5462-3703.

COMMUNITIES/SHARES

HUNDRED ACRES REMNANT FOREST, Qld, rich black fertile soil. Single mum, well travelled, needs 'new settlers', creative shareholders, dreamers. Starting intentional community. Ph: 0410-138-026. Email: silvercliffaustralia@yahoo.com.au

THE WOLERY COMMUNITY NEAR DENMARK, WA, invites expression of interest in membership – single or couple only – to buy & occupy sml high-quality passive solar duplex unit. See www.wolery.green.net.au Ph: 08-9840-9068 or 08-9840-9232.

FOR SALE

BULK HERBAL EXTRACTOR. Automatic 240V machine. Quality solid extracts from water & ice. Free DVD. Ph: 02-6734-6322.

PHOTOS FOR GRASSIES
A 5.5 x 3.5 cm photo costs only $15. Just send a digital jpeg file or real photo with your ad, or call us on 03-5792-4000.

MONGOLIAN YURTS: practical, portable, durable, ecofriendly, authentically made, beautifully decorated, imported new from Mongolia. Great as initial dwelling on your land, or use as b/r, guesthouse, birthing space, sleep-out, studio, B & B etc. Six m diameter yurt AUD $7975; furnished yurt AUD $9955. Also, 6 exciting tours to Mongolia in 2006, July to Oct, customised travel arranged. Ph: Viktor, Aust, 03-9482-2238. Website: www.mongolianadventures.com

PUBLICATIONS

HOME EDUCATION, for info send SAE to: Home Education Network, PO Box 461, DAYLESFORD 3460.

SUPPRESSED & UNUSUAL TECHNOLOGIES CATALOGUE: free energy devices, antigravity, hydrogen fuel, magnetic motors, alternate fuels & engines, high mileage, 200+ topics. Send 5 x Aust 50 c stamps to: Lostech Archive, PO Box 456-R, TOLGA, Qld 4882, Aust.

'NIMBIN NEWS MAGAZINE', is a cooperatively run access magazine with articles & information from Nimbin & other areas. We cover concerns relevant to alternative lifestylers & others looking for the most sustainable way. We are one of the longest running alternative magazines & the Nimbin bioregion is at the forefront in the development of sustainable systems. As networkers we scan many mags for suitable & scarce information for our readers. Subscription: 6 issues for $20, sample $3.50. Back copies 5 for $12 posted. PO Box 209, NIMBIN 2480. *Beyond the Rainbow* – literary mag. Sub: $18 per year for 6 editions. Email: nimbinnews@nrg.com.au

'NEW VEGETARIAN & NATURAL HEALTH', the magazine of the Natural Health & Vegetarian societies. Subscribe today, $30 yearly, & receive: 4 vital magazines, discounts at participating health food stores & natural therapies practitioners listed in magazine. Head Office, 28/541 High St, PENRITH, NSW 2750. Ph: 02-4721-5068.

LIKE CHOOKS OR DUCKS? You need *Starting Out With Chickens*, & *Starting Out With Ducks and Geese*. Books are paperback size, 56 pages, illustrated. Great for beginners. Buy 1 at $9.95 incl p&h or 2 for $16.95 incl p&h. Australasian Poultry, PO Box 438, SEYMOUR 3661 or ph: 03-5792-4000.

'THE MIRACLE OF MULCH' by Mary Horsfall: Mulch builds up organic matter, fertility & biodiversity in your soil for long-term garden health. *The Miracle Of Mulch* has vital mulching know-how so you can save water, save money & help the environment. Easy-to-read layout, great pics. $20 for signed copy from author, incl postage, $35 for 2. Ph: 0417-569-411, or write: Notable Products, PO Box 101, EUROA 3666.

BOOKS, NEW AND OLD. Australiana, lifestyle, Pacific, biography, horticulture, gardening, outdoors. Lists avail. BA & JM Wallace, Box 325, PORTLAND 3305.

GRASSIFIEDS

PUBLICATIONS

'NATIVE STINGLESS BEES' for profit or pleasure – how to get started, pollination/honey potential in Qld. Detailed info booklets, packed with photographs, diagrams. For free catalogue, send name, address & 50 c stamp to: ANBRC, Box 74-G4, North Richmond, NSW 2754.

MARJORIE BLIGH BOOKS FOR SALE: *At Home With Marjorie Bligh* – $15; *Marjorie Bligh's A – Z Of Gardening* – $12.50; *Marjorie Bligh's Homely Hints On Everything* – $12.50; *Life Is For Living* – $15; *Tasmania And Beyond* – $15; *Crafts, Old, New, Recycled* – $15. Please add postage of $7.90 for 1 – 3 books. Send cheque or money order to Marjorie Bligh, 163 Madden St, DEVONPORT 7310. Remember to include your address.

FOOD & KITCHEN

HOME STONE FLOUR MILLS – WHEATGRASS JUICERS. Mill your own stoneground wholemeal flour for cakes & bread with a Retsel Little Ark stone flour mill. Start juicing wheatgrass juice at home. Visit www.retsel.com.au 'Endorsed by Housewives' Association.' Write for catalogue: PO Box 712, DANDENONG 3175, enclose 3 postage stamps. Ph: 03-9795-2725. Distributors' enquiries welcome.

STONEGROUND FLOUR in-home, with a SCHNITZER German quality hand or electric stone mill, 6 models from $178. SCHNITZER MILLS, PO Box 747, KATOOMBA 2780. Ph: 02-8205-7304. Website: www.schnitzer.com.au

MISCELLANEOUS

COLLOIDAL SILVER GENERATOR: New design, microprocessor controlled, just add high-grade distilled water. Discount of $20 by mentioning this advert. PO Box 434, PARK HOLME 5043. Full details on website: www.cs.kestar.com.au Email: admin@kestar.com.au

HOW TO MAKE MONEY selling & making chess pieces, birdbaths, fine art, gnomes etc. Plaster and/or cement moulds. For methods & catalogue send $14.95 to: Williams Imports, PO Box 989, SOUTHPORT 4215 (06/50 Railway St). Ph/fax: 07-5532-9050. Website: www.supermoulds.com.au

TEEPEES, VIKING TENTS, medieval tents, swags, buckskin clothing. Seventeen years experience. BOJO Products, PO Box 112, AVENEL 3664. Ph: 0412-368-034, 03-5796-2753 AH. Email: bojo_products@hotmail.com Website: www.frojel.com/members/bojo

VICTORIANS NOW HAVE A NEW OPPORTUNITY for buying & selling conservation land. The site also provides information & links to statewide planning schemes, environmental management incentives & natural resource management constraints. Look at website: www.conservationbroker.net.au

PLACING AN AD?
See page 76 for details

GARDEN & ORCHARD

IRIS: TALL BEARDED $7, med $5, dwf $2. 'Rose of Sharon', Lot 40 Hopetoun Rd, RUTHERGLEN 3685. Ph: 02-6032-8428. Web: www.tourisminternet.com.au/ruthiris.htm

BAMBOO PLANTS, lge range, best prices. Ph: 07-4129-4470, fax: 07-4129-0130. Website: www.satcom.net.au/bambooland

ORGANIC VEGETABLE AND HERB SEED: Select Organic, ph: 07-5533-1177. Write: MS 905, LOWER BEECHMONT 4211. Website: www.selectorganic.com.au

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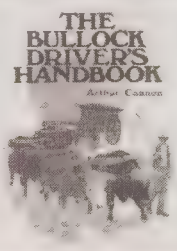

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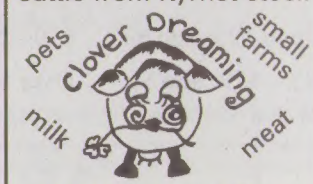

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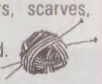

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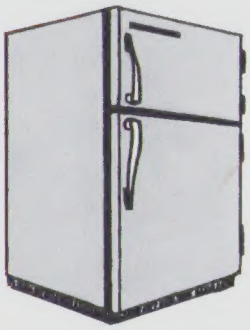

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